

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 03702 9896

Gc 976.302 P74b

Baudier, Roger, 1893-1960.
1844-1944

ST. THOMAS
PARISH

ST. THOMAS PARISH

1844

1944

One
Hundred
Years

ST. THOMAS PARISH

~~277.63
P. 15~~

POINTE-A-LA-HACHE

PLAQUEMINES PARISH, LA.

BY

ROGER BAUDIER, K. S. G.



Prepared with the co-operation of the Fathers of the Society of
the Divine Word, now in charge of St. Thomas Parish.

BX
4603
.P65
B38
1944



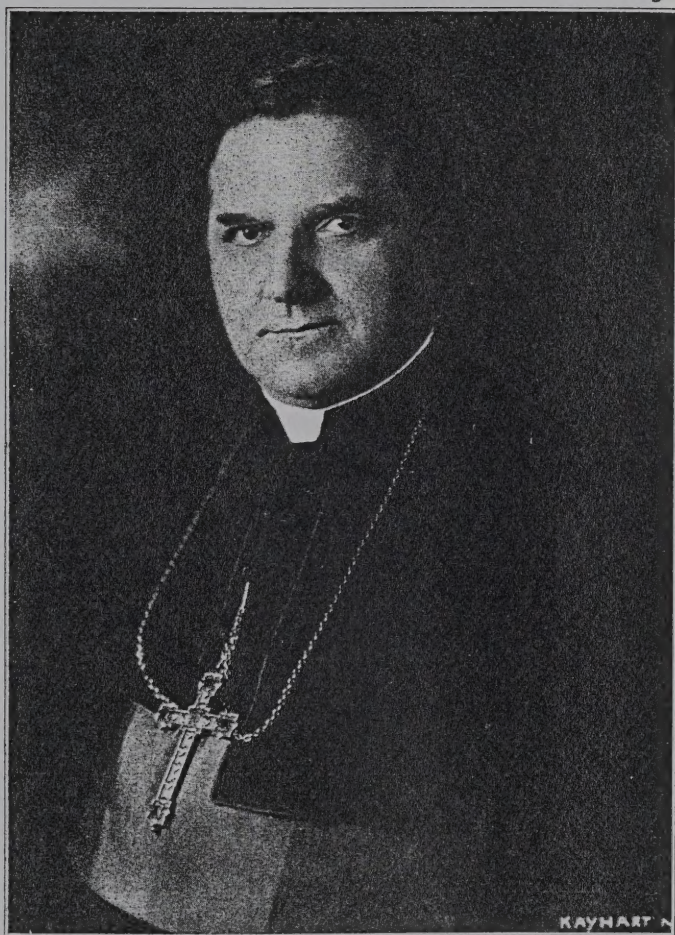
Nihil Obstat

D. C. O'MEARA, S.M.,
Censor Deputatus.

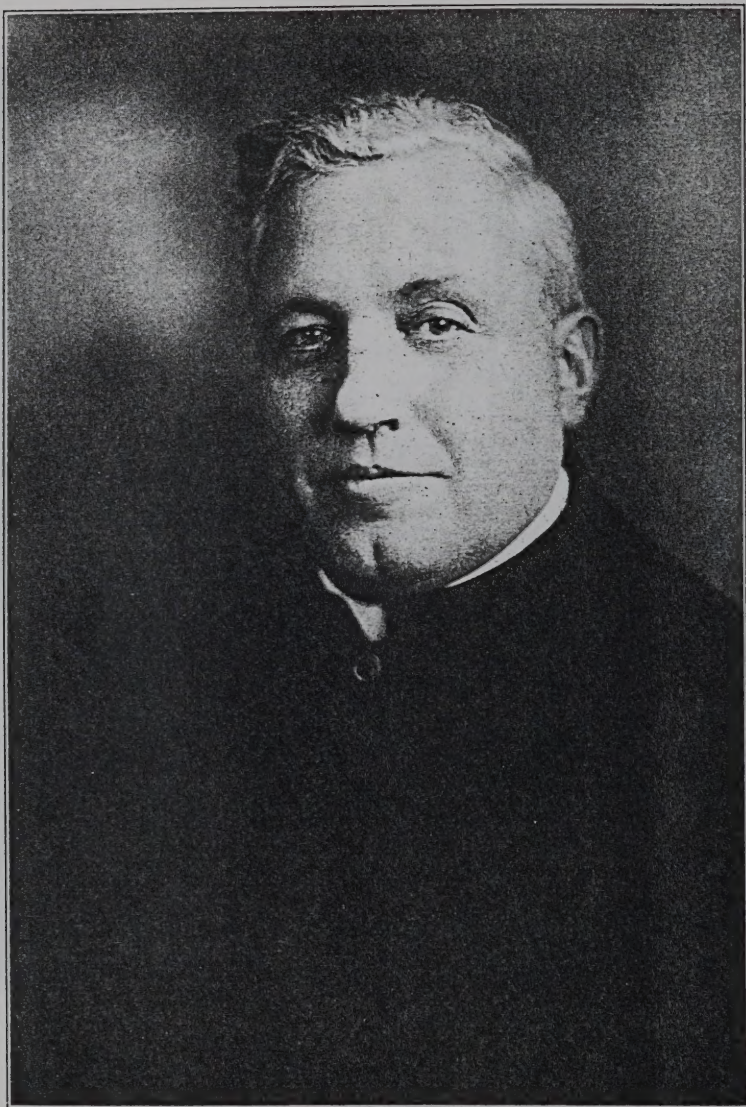
Imprimatur

JOSEPH F. RUMMEL,
Archiepiscopus Novae Aureliae,
Die XXII Sept., 1944.





*His Excellency,
The Most Reverend Joseph Francis Rummel, S.T.D.
Archbishop of New Orleans*



Very Rev. Joseph F. Eckert, S.V.D.,
Provincial of the Society of the Divine Word

Pioneer Catholic Events

CHAPTER I

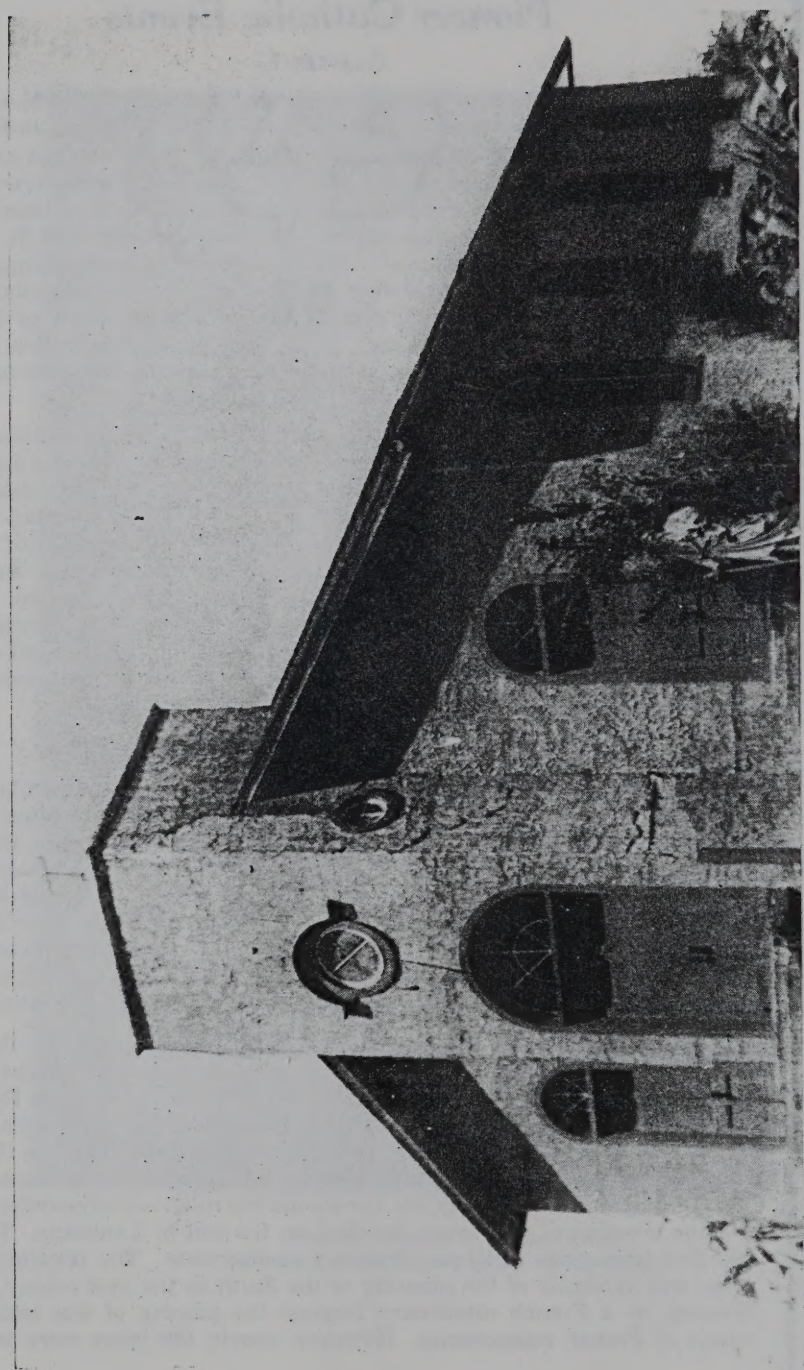
Just as truly as Plaquemines Parish is the daughter of "Old Man River", so its pioneer Catholic Church Parish, St. Thomas of Pointe-a-la-Hache, is mother of all Catholic churches within its civil confines, and just as Pointe-a-la-Hache has been the pioneer center of civil life in Plaquemines, so has St. Thomas Church been the pioneer center of the Catholic administration and Catholic life. The observance this year of the centennial of St. Thomas Church, is therefore, a matter of wide interest and of historic importance, because of the close bond between the majority of the inhabitants who have wrested out a flourishing community from the "Father of Waters", and the Catholic Church that has been their solace, inspiration and encouragement down the decades, as they fought floods, and ever-menacing river and natural obstacles to establish their American homes.

In the annals of the Catholic Church in Louisiana, Plaquemines Parish holds an important position, for some of the greatest and most significant Catholic events took place within its borders. These events determined that the great empire of the Mississippi Valley was to be a French domain, and that it was to be evangelized by the heroic missionaries of France. Spanish missionaries had pushed into the forbidden stretches of the Southwest, and the Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits had already entered Florida and pushed up the Atlantic Coast as far north as Virginia. Between the two great areas, lay the huge valley which was opened up from the South to the French Catholic missionaries by events that occurred in Plaquemines Parish.

Explorers Visited Plaquemines

In the first part of the 16th century the tattered remnants of De-Narvaez's ill-fated expedition skirted the shores of Plaquemines Parish, including among its members America's first Bishop designate, the Franciscan Fray Juan Suarez, and four fellow Franciscans. One account states that the boat overturned at the mouth of the Mississippi and all were drowned, but other historians say that the remaining priests were drowned at Matagorda Bay, Texas. A little more than a decade later, there floated down the winding river through the Plaquemine country, the handful of men from DeSoto's expedition, seeking to find their way to Mexico.

Finally, in April 1682, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, the great French explorer, came down the Mississippi river to its mouth, and a short distance from the Gulf of Mexico, on the soil of Plaquemines Parish he planted the cross and the arms of France, claimed the whole area for the King of France, and proclaimed the intention of establishing the Christian religion within its domain. Father Zenobius Membre, a Franciscan Friar, who accompanied the expedition, conducted the religious ceremonies attending the erection of this cross, the first on the soil of Louisiana. This was the first important religious ceremony in the state. The planting of the cross was symbolic of the planting of the Faith in the new colony, and its blessing by a French missionary forecast the placing of this task in the hands of French missionaries. However, nearly 150 years were to elapse



Present day St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache, the third parish church erected since the year 1847.

before the first resident priest was to establish himself permanently in Plaquemines Parish where the first ceremony took place.

When France made its first effort to colonize the new empire, Plaquemines Parish was the scene of other important events connected with the history of the Church. Pierre Lemoyne, Sieur d'Iberville, and Jean Baptist Le Moyne de Bienville, led the first expedition that arrived on the shores of the Gulf Coast, early in 1699. Iberville and Bienville, with a group of men, accompanied by Father Anastase Douay, a Franciscan Friar, entered the Mississippi River. When they had become convinced that this was the great river they sought, they landed and on March 3, 1699, Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras), Father Anastase offered Mass, the first Mass on the soil of Louisiana, so far as available documents prove—and this historic event was on the soil of Plaquemines Parish. On the next day, Ash Wednesday, Iberville saw to it that religious exercises of the day were conducted. Hence, the first ceremonies of the distribution of blessed ashes and opening of the penitential season of Lent were first conducted in the state also in historic Plaquemines Parish.

Crosses Planted Along the River

As the expedition journeyed up the river, Iberville and Bienville planted crosses along the banks—one of them near the future site of Pointe-a-la-Hache, prophetic of a day when a permanent church would rear its steeple there with a cross aloft. Father Davion, Father de Montigny and Father de St. Cosme voyaged down the river through Plaquemines Parish in subsequent years, but none of them, the records indicate, tarried in the marshy lands of the river's delta.

Jesuit Missionaries in Plaquemines

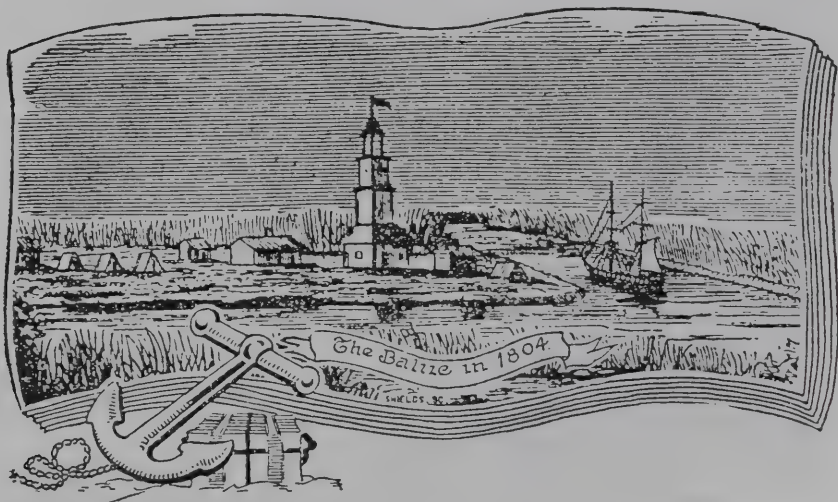
The first priest to take up quarters on the land of the parish was heroic Father Paul DuRu, famous Jesuit missionary who came with Iberville's second expedition. When Bienville, coming down the river from an exploration trip, met an English ship in the Mississippi in a bend of the river near present-day Caernarvon and Braithwaite, he succeeded by a ruse in having the captain of the ship turn around and leave Louisiana. This spot became known as *le Detour des Anglais* or "English Turn", a name used to this day. This English threat led the French to build a fort 17 or 18 leagues from the mouth of the river, on a mound. In recent years, study and research has definitely located this fort at Phoenix, La., formerly St. Sophie, ten miles above Pointe-a-la-Hache, and now a mission of St. Thomas. Father DuRu offered Mass on the boat at the shore of the new fortification, on February 5, 1700, then went ashore, busying himself in gathering reeds to erect a chapel and making an altar. On Sunday, February 7, he offered Mass at the fort for the officers and men. On the following Sunday, February 14, 1700, a huge cross was erected and blessed by Father DuRu who blessed also a cemetery. Returning to the shed, which he had erected, Father DuRu offered Mass and preached. Two days later, the tireless priest planted orange seeds in a clearing and also in the nearby woods, then left for Indian villages and white settlements up the river.

He returned to Fort de la Boulaye or Fort Mississippi to conduct the ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter Sunday, then left to visit the Choctaws on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain. On December 17, 1700, Father Jacques Gravier, another Jesuit, reached Fort Mississippi, where he re-

mained for four months—"often in water knee-deep from a great flood of the river that winter." After a visit to Biloxi in 1701, he returned to the fort, then left to work among the Bayougoula Indians up river.

There is no further record of Church work in these lower stretches of the Mississippi River until the coming of the Capuchin Fathers in 1722, to whom was entrusted the task of providing spiritual ministrations in the lower Louisiana colony. Concessions had been granted along the river below New Orleans and plantations were already beginning to develop. Besides, the French had begun under De Pauger, the Royal Engineer, to establish fortifications and a pilot station and a landing at one of the river passes, which was called La Balize. That post was visited by the famous Jesuit explorer and historian, Father Charlevoix in 1721, who blessed the site and the works. In 1722, Father Davion also visited there on his way back to France. In October 19, 1722, an order was issued to the Capuchin Friars at New Orleans to send a chaplain to La Balize, so Father Christophe de Chaumont was sent by Father Bruno, the superior, to visit that dreary outpost, the first mission of New Orleans on the lower river. Father Christophe was also charged with visiting and serving the concessions and settlements along the river below New Orleans. He served at La Balize as late as May, 1725. A report of 1724 designates Father Christophe as assigned to Natchez, and Father Philibert de Viauden, who had served the settlements of the upper river, as missionary for La Balize and the Lower Coast. This report recommended the establishment of a church and one priest with a servant, at English Turn to serve the plantations along the lower river, but this was unfortunately not carried out.

Finally, in 1725 or 1726, Father Gaspard, a Capuchin, was sent to La Balize, but no chapel was built there yet. The missionary suffered great hardships there and his living conditions were so disgraceful that an official



La Balize at the mouth of the river was the scene of Capuchin missionary labors during the early French colonial period, when a chapel was built there.

protest had to be lodged before there was any improvement, and finally a chapel was erected. La Balize was served by the Capuchins as late as 1752, the last two stationed there being Father Archange and Father Maximin.

The Friars continued to make occasional visits along the plantations of the Lower Coast, and the settlement at Fort St. Leon, which had been built some distance below New Orleans on the West Bank. The Cathedral registers show visits on the Lower Coast by Father Matthias, Father Irenee and Father Dagobert.

Church for Lower Coast Recommended

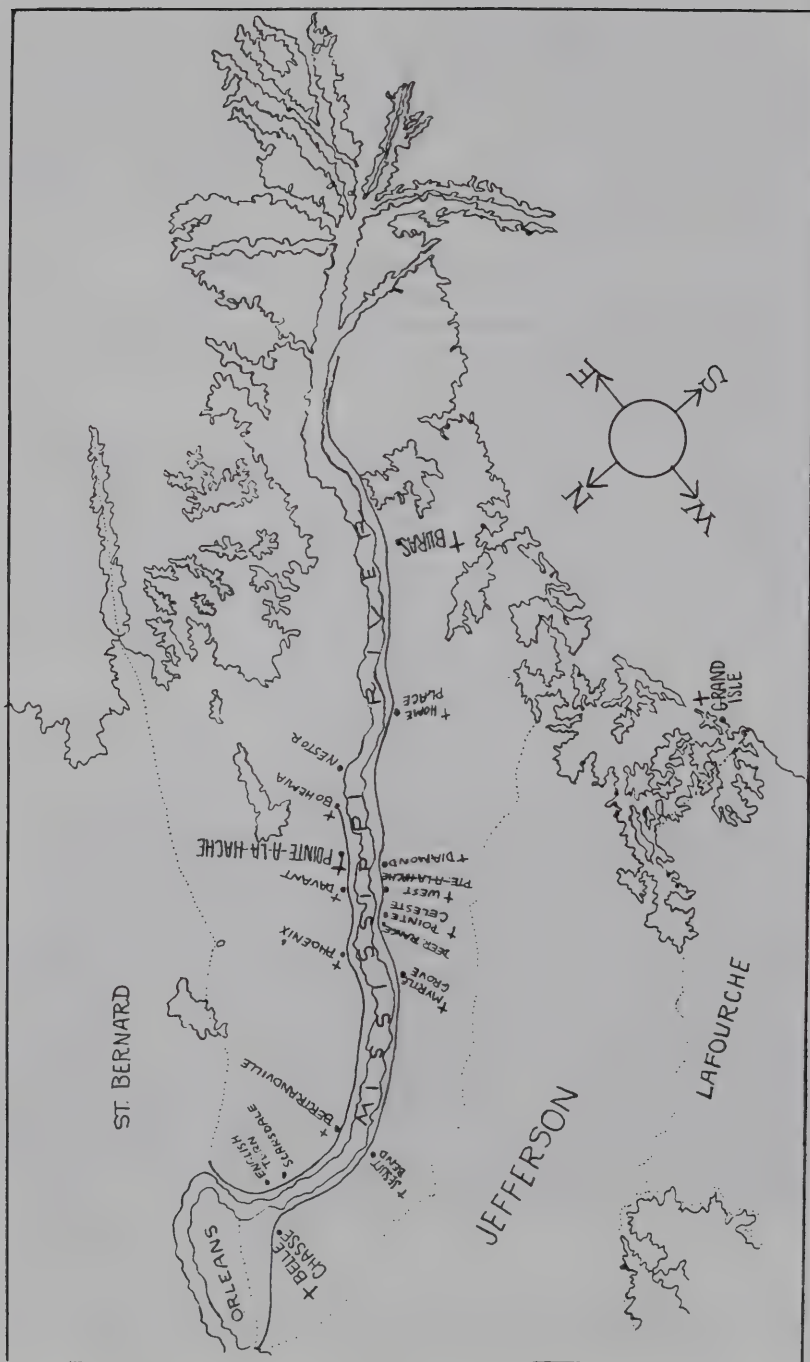
Father Dagobert, who became superior of the Capuchins, always manifested a deep interest in the Lower Coast section and on several occasions appealed for a church to be erected in that area and that a missionary be provided for the people, but his appeals met with no response from the French colonial government.

Finally, during the Spanish domination, the first definite effort to provide proper spiritual ministrations for the Catholics below New Orleans was made. Governor Bernardo de Galvez authorized a settlement in the territory above English Turn, where a high ridge extended from the river back towards Lake Borgne. Galvez built a summer home there and the settlement which was originally known as the Post of the Conception, after the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, later took the name of New Galvez, and eventually was called *Terre-aux-Boeufs* from the large number of oxen used in the sugarcane area as draft animals.

Spanish Friars Serve Plaquemines

A church was erected on the ridge, midway between the river and the lake, and it was placed under the invocation of St. Bernard, patron of the governor. It was served at first by the priests stationed at the New Orleans Cathedral, but in 1785, a resident priest was assigned to serve the church and territory. It is inferred that he had charge of the whole Lower Coast. During the Spanish domination, Spanish Capuchin Friars served the St. Bernard Church and the plantations of the territory below it along the banks of the Mississippi. The missionaries who served St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish during the Spanish colonial period, as resident pastors, were Father Marino de Brunete, Father Jose de Villaproveda, Father Firso de Peleagonzale and Father Domingo Joachin Solano. The last mentioned Friar left in 1802, and the parish was vacant.

The registers of that church reveal names of settlers and residents along the river, but not infrequently, people of the Lower Coast went to the Cathedral for Baptisms and marriages. However, St. Bernard Church continued as the parish church for Plaquemines Parish for another half century.



Map of Plaquemines Parish, the whole of which a century ago constituted the ecclesiastical Parish of St. Thomas. Large crosses indicate present day parish churches, and smaller crosses some of St. Thomas missions, past and present.

Plaquemines Parish

CHAPTER II

The territory below St. Bernard Parish on both sides of the Mississippi River to its mouth was created into a civil parish in 1807, four years after the Louisiana Purchase. It was given the name of Plaquemines, but that name had been in use in that area long before. The origin of the name generally accepted is that it was taken from the Indian word, *piakimin*, which means persimmon, and the French word, *plaquemine* was formed from this Indian word. The name was applied to that area, it is said by William A. Read, because of the persimmon trees found there.

Settlement of the high ground or natural levee along the banks of the river began after the establishment of New Orleans. Officials of the Company of the Indies, officers of the colonial military forces and colonists obtained grants of land all along the east bank, and by 1723, the grants covered all the river front almost to present-day Violet. On the west bank up to that time, the grants extended solidly down to the present site of Belle Chasse.

The 1723 map of the concessions shows the first plantation on the east bank in Plaquemine Parish at its upper end, as *l'Habitation des Freres Carriere*. Near present-day Carlisle, the map shows a wide deep clearing, marked as the village of the Chahouacha Indians, and *l'Habitation du Sieur Delvo*. A little further down, near Phoenix, in another clearing, are indicated *Cabanes et desert des Sauvages*. Near Pointe-a-la-Hache, perhaps even occupying the Indian mound on which the church and cemetery were later established, is another clearing with Indian cabins.

Beginning of Settlements

The west bank is shown on this map with the first plantation at the upper end as that of *Sieur Trepanier*, at *Belle Chasse*. Three plantations are shown around Jesuit Bend: *Habitation St. Catherine*, *Habitation de M. Louis a present a la Compagnie*, and *Habitation de M. LeBlanc et ses Associates*.

Such were the beginnings of the settlements in Plaquemines Parish other than the Government station at La Balize. French colonial officials ordered the fortification of the mouth of the river and the Royal Engineer, Adrian de Pauger, was assigned to this task. This was known as La Balize. Ambitious plans were made for a lighthouse, in the base of which was to be installed the chapel of the post. Many historic personages, coming to the colonial capital of Louisiana up the river, paused for a few days' rest at this post. Among these were the first Ursuline Nuns who stopped at La Balize at the end of July, 1727.

The French established forts also at Plaquemines Bend, Fort St. Pierre on the east bank, and Fort Bourbon on the west bank. The French established another one on the west bank in the river bend called English Turn, which became known as Fort St. Leon. The Capuchin Fathers from New

Orleans visited this fort. After Spain took over the colony, Governor Carondelet rebuilt the Plaquemines Bend fortification lower down the river, Fort St. Pierre becoming Fort St. Philip. A settlement developed there and this became *El Puesto de las Plaqueminas*. A chaplain was sent there temporarily during the Spanish regime to serve the troops stationed there.

The first settlers in Plaquemines Parish were French and Spanish, among the latter being Canary Islanders, originally settlers in the Terreaux-Boeufs section of St. Bernard Parish, some of whom later moved lower down the river. Some Acadian families also settled in this area, but the Pointe-a-la-Hache church registers do not reveal any large number of descendants of such families. They show French immigrants still coming into this territory during the past mid-century, when Italian immigration had already started; free people of Color settled in the parish also. The large Negro population is explained by the fact that plantations were large and numerous, requiring much slave labor. When the slaves were freed, they remained in the parish. It is of interest to note that the free people of Color who took up lands and developed farms, were slave owners, and the St. Thomas registers show Baptisms of slaves belonging to these Negro freemen more than a score of years before the Emancipation Declaration.

Pioneer Families Are Recalled

The Works Projects Administration historical sketch of Plaquemines Parish, quoting Fortier, states that among the first settlers were Jacob Hingle, the Crosses (also Cosses), Martins, Dennex (Dennes), Dobards. Salvants, Fontanelles, Wilkinsons, Dominiques, Najos, and Delatours. The volume on Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana (1892) lists among other early settlers the Barrois, Jeanfreaus, Ragas, Lafrances and Ronquillos. Practically all of these names appear in the early records of the parish church. Francois Martin received a French grant in Plaquemines in 1765. Public land records show that Bartholomew Baptiste claimed a tract of land at a place called *Quartier de la Pointe-a-la-Hache* which was inhabited and cultivated at the time, December 20, 1803, but had been cultivated already 10 years prior to that, or in 1793. This was in the City Price section.

Two Sea Captains, Bradish and Johnson, established the Magnolia Plantation, just below West Pointe-a-la-Hache, in 1870. Bradish Johnson, son of one of the founders, named after the father's partner, appears in St. Thomas church registers among the Baptisms.

Famous Plantations Are Established

With the Louisiana Purchase, the American invasion, which had begun already during the Spanish regime, to the alarm of Spanish colonial officials, made itself felt in the lower river parish. American and English names became more and more frequent. Among the large plantations established by them in the area was the Myrtle Grove plantation of the Wilkinsons, begun about the time of the Battle of New Orleans. On the east bank were the Stella Plantation, the Coiron Plantation and the Belair Plantation, all originating in the first half of the last century. There were others, as we shall note, where the parish priests officiated.

Many prominent Creole families owned plantations in both St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish before the War Between the States, but many

were impoverished in the Reconstruction period that followed, and moved permanently to their city homes.

The Dalmatian and Slavonian immigrants came much later. These people established themselves in the lower reaches of the river, where they engaged in fishing and oyster culture.

Origin of Pointe-a-la-Hache

The whole vast territory of Plaquemines Parish for decades was essentially an agricultural area, made up of a succession of large plantations, "habitations", and small farms on both sides of the river. On the east bank these gradually extended down the river far below Pointe-a-la-Hache, beyond Bohemia. However on the west bank, the plantations and farms were more highly developed and they extended further down, reaching some distance below Buras, which became the center of a citrus-producing area. Settlements or villages developed extremely slowly. The beginnings of even the parish seat, Pointe-a-la-Hache, which is also the center of the mother Catholic church of the civil parish, are lost in the haze of the past, and it is just as difficult to trace the origins of other towns that are connected with the work of the church during the past century. Even the origin of the name of Pointe-a-la-Hache is uncertain, and two explanations are given; one that it takes its name from the formation of the land by a cut in the river, having the appearance of an axe; the other, that in early steamboat days, this was a refueling point where sailors chopped wood for the boilers. As early as 1839, it is known that the parish seat was fixed on a tract of land just below the plantation of Charles Reggio. An attempt was made to move the parish seat in 1870 to Jesuits' Bend, but this failed and it remained at the present location. The name Pointe-a-la-Hache first appears in the church records in 1843.

"Quartiers" Develop Along Mississippi

Around the middle of the last century, records refer to various sections as *Quartiers*. Among these are *Quartier de Buras* (1843), *Quartier Ronquillo*, *Quartier Barthelemy*. *Anse-aux-Jesuits*, Jesuits' Bend, appears in the St. Thomas records as early as 1848, where a cemetery already existed. As early as 1854, the name *Fantasie* appears apparently for present-day Phoenix. However, before 1869, the place was known as St. Sophie, due, it is said, to a large plantation so named at that point. *Quartier Barthelemy* became Freetown, then City Price. Ronquille has become Home Place. Bertrandville got its name from Pierre Bertrand, a Frenchman, who bought a strip of land at that point, many years ago. The name Deer Range appears in the Church records around the time of the War Between the States. Many other settlements developed in the course of time, but none of them growing to a large size. The names of others, now forgotten names, occur in the church records, and they shall be noted.

Such, generally, was the Mississippi delta territory, established into a civil parish in 1807, a territory that became so populated and included so many Catholics that diocesan authorities at New Orleans felt obliged to provide spiritual ministrations for them.

Father Martin and Father Caretta

CHAPTER III

After the Louisiana Purchase, the Plaquemines territory continued to be served from St. Bernard Church at Terre-aux-Boeufs. However, many of the plantation people made periodical visits to New Orleans by boat and had their children baptized at St. Louis Cathedral. The majority, however, depended on St. Bernard Church. Plaquemines was neglected for several decades, but the people, nevertheless, retained the Faith of their fathers.

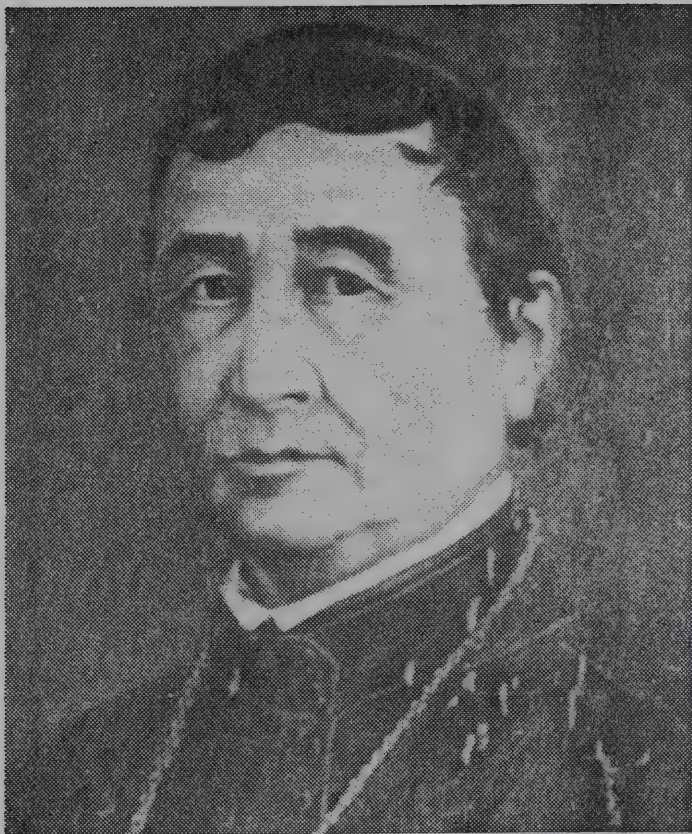
When the Spanish clergy retired from Louisiana at the time of the cession, St. Bernard was left without a pastor until 1805, when Father Jean Marie Rochanson was placed in charge. From 1807 to 1808, Father Herman Joseph Stocker was pastor, followed by Father Pierre Bussi, but the latter left in 1813, and again St. Bernard was vacant. Father Sibourd, the Vicar General from New Orleans, and other priests from the city came to minister to the Catholics of that area. Rev. A. Millet was pastor from 1823 to 1826, then Rev. Auguste de Angelis. Rev. Juan Casado, a Spanish priest, was in charge of St. Bernard parish from 1826 to 1830, followed by Rev. Felix Loperanza, and Rev. Jean Martin in succession. Such were the priests who looked after the spiritual welfare of the people in the immense territory from Violet to the mouth of the river along both banks.

Tradition Recalls Tiny Frame Church

This arrangement was extremely unsatisfactory, and it was quite evident that proper attention was not being given to more than 2000 Catholics of Plaquemines Parish. According to the Works Progress Administration historic sketch of the parish, verified by traditions of old-timers, there was a very small chapel or church since 1820 in the Pointe-a-la-Hache area. No record has been found of this pioneer church nor has its name been determined. It is possible that this may have been a plantation chapel, as it was often customary for the large plantations to have such places of worship. If it did exist, it must have been used by the New Orleans priests who visited the area, and by the St. Bernard priests, in whose care the territory was placed.

Bishop Leo de Neckere, C.M., Ordinary of the New Orleans diocese, had died in 1833, and pending the appointment of a successor by the Holy See, Very Rev. Antoine Blanc, the Vicar General, served as Administrator of the diocese. Father Blanc, aware of the neglected condition of the faithful on the plantations and homes of the Lower Coast, possibly from the reports of Father Jean Martin or complaints from the Catholic plantation people, instructed Father Martin, St. Bernard pastor, to proceed on a mission in Plaquemines Parish in 1834.

That Father Martin was to look after the spiritual welfare of the Plaquemines Catholics and that it was then intended to form a church parish down there eventually, is evident from the fact that special registers were opened for that territory, one for Baptisms and one for marriages. The



Most Rev. Antoine Blanc, fourth Bishop of New Orleans and its first Archbishop, erected the Parish of St. Thomas of Pointe-a-la-rache.

former contains this inscription on its fly sheet: "Register of Baptisms of the Parish of Plaquemines, State of Louisiana—1834".

On page No. 1 of that book, the following authorization was inscribed by this pioneer priest: "The year 1834, the 25th of the month of February, I, Jean Martin, Roman Catholic Priest, undersigned, was sent on a mission in the Parishes of St. Bernard and Plaquemines by the Rev. Antoine Blanc, Vicar General and Administrator of the Diocese during the vacancy of the See, to exercise the functions of my ministry, in faith of which I have signed—MARTIN, Priest, Missionary."

Plaquemines Parish had no regular parish church at the time in its whole vast area, so Father Martin proceeded from house to house, where he Baptized, instructed, performed marriages and offered Holy Mass. These visits were generally at "habitations" and from the Baptism and marriage registers, one can follow his journeys around the parish, and get an idea of the inhabitants of the time.

His first Baptism was an emergency one at Arneau Laneau's place. We

quote this historic entry in full: "In the year 1834, the 5th of March, I undersigned Roman Catholic Priest, missionary, have *ondoye* at Arneau Laneau's, his daughter, Valere Laneau, born December 10, 1832, of the legitimate marriage of Arneau Landeau and of Adeline Fossie, her father and mother, propertyholding inhabitants of this parish. In faith of which I have signed—Martin." The French term "*ondoye*" is used for the administration of Baptism in an emergency, without the ceremonies as they are administered in church.

The same day, Father Martin Baptized 10 slave children belonging to Laneau, all listed as "natural children". From there, he went to Augustin Dupre's house, also a property-holder, and on the same date Baptized five slave children. On March 7, he was at Francois Delery's house, where seven slave children received Baptism. Later that day, he went to the plantation of the Lizardi Brothers and Baptized nine little slaves. And thus he continued his journey, including visits to the homes of free people of Color who were Catholics. Among the latter were slave owners and he Baptized their children too. At the Baptisms of slaves, frequently adult slaves were sponsors, but often the masters and their wives or their relatives stood as sponsors, a custom that was quite prevalent in those times and dated back to French colonial days.

Father Martin Visited Old Families

Among the "*habitations*" and homes visited by Father Martin on this pioneer visitation were those of Francois Moreau, Widow Joseph Martin, Joseph Laussade, Widow Sylvain Duplaisis, Damien Ragas, Maximilien Martin, Jourdan Martin, Hortense Denes, Henry Hingle, Jean Joseph Voisin (husband of Aurelie Clause), Jean Edouere Baril (native of the Commune of Bleville, Hav-de-Grace, France and husband of Delphine Buras), the Buras family, Francois Sylve, Cyprien Ragas, Hipolite Hingle, Pierre Jean Pierre Buras, Francois Barrois, Joachim Bulet, Robert Johnson, Manuel Ronquillo, Auguste Greleau (of St. Nazere, Department of the Loire, France), Pierre Auguste Covin, the merchant (from the Department of the Rhone, France), George William Rapp, Joseph Chaperon, Dufoucher, Theodore Bacheman, Bonaventure Bayhi, Leon Bayhi, Widow Bayhi, Rosemont Fagot, Louis Valet, Lavergne and "Vilerets" Brothers, and Felix, Jules and Gabriel "Villerets", the last mentioned, listed as in St. Bernard.

The first Baptism in the Buras family—so widely known in the parish—recorded in this first register by Father Martin was that of Marie Pauline Buras, daughter of Marie Buras and Jean Firmin Buras, dated March 13, 1834. Justin Buras and Celeste Buras, an uncle and an aunt were the sponsors. That same day Father Martin baptized 10 Buras children, and on March 15, he baptized eight Buras children, besides several others of Buras mothers.

First Marriage Record Preserved

The first marriage found in the register is a copy for a ceremony performed at St. Bernard, under the date October 25, some year between 1808 and 1813, performed by Father Pedro Busti. This was the marriage of John Preveau, son of the late Adrian Preveau and Miss Camille Ronquillo, daughter of the late Juan Ronquillo and the late Mrs. Graciana Solis, natives of that territory. The witnesses were John Ronquillo, a brother of the bride, and Manuel Solis, her cousin, and Mrs. Ronquillo Solis, her sister. This is

evidence that the Catholics of the parish in those days came all the way up to St. Bernard church.

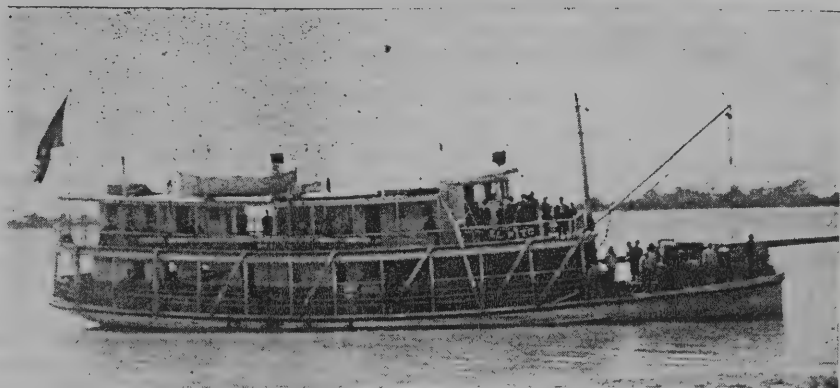
The first marriage by Father Martin was performed on March 15, 1834, when Abram Myer, native of Albany, N. Y., was married to Miss Jeanne Amelie Yarbry, native of Plaquemines Parish, minor daughter of Gourdan (probably Gordon) Yarbry and of Widow Jean Cosses.

The second one, performed on the same date, is that of Pierre Hubert Buras, son of Hubert Buras, a planter and Marie Louise Cosses, to Miss Rosine Buras, daughter of Pierre Jean Buras and Marie Louise Collet. Pierre Jean Pierre Buras' name appears frequently in the records as witness or sponsor.

A recapitulation made in later years by Father Langlois, shows that Father Martin, during his labors in Plaquemines Parish performed 160 Baptisms, of which 77 were boys and 83 girls.

Father Caretta Takes Charge of Plaquemines

Father Martin left about 1835, taking up work in Pointe Coupee, then at St. James, being replaced by Rev. Victor Jamey until 1837. Finally, Bishop Blanc sent Rev. Jean Caretta to assume the pastorate in 1837 with instructions to serve both St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes. Father Caretta was a zealous and energetic priest, a native of Italy, who had volunteered to serve with Bishop Dubourg in Louisiana, when the latter was in Europe for his consecration and recruiting missionaries for Louisiana, 1815-1817. Father Caretta came with an advance group in 1816, and finished his studies at St. Thomas Seminary in Bardstown, Ky. He served in Missouri, then became assistant at the New Orleans Cathedral. Later he made the visitation of the diocese with Bishop Rosati in 1826. In the following year (1827) he became pastor of Assumption Church at Plattenville, La. Later, after work in other sections, he received the assignment to St. Bernard's Church. Father Jamey, while pastor before Father Caretta there, had done little for Plaquemines Parish, and his name does not appear in its registers. There followed a period of neglect until Father Caretta began in 1841 to



Packet boats, such as the one shown above, photographed in 1912, were a common scene along the river in Plaquemines Parish many decades before that time.

look after the faithful in Plaquemines, signing as "Pastor of St. Bernard and Spiritual Administrator of Plaquemines". He made regular visits through the territory at long intervals. Like Father Martin, he went from house to house, and plantation to plantation, performing marriages and Baptisms, giving instructions and offering Mass. We find him at *le Quartier de Buras* and at *l'habitation des Monsieurs Freres Wederstrandt*, also at Bernard Marigny, Bonaventure Bayhi, William Erskin and the Reggios. Within a few days in May, 1842, he baptized 22 persons. In that year (1842) the Bishop decided to build a church in Plaquemines and to provide it with a resident pastor, but difficulties intervened.

French Abbe Serves Catholics

The arrival in 1843, of a priest nobleman from France, gave the faithful of the Lower Coast the advantages, at least for a few months, of zealous ministrations. He was Abbe Baron d'Auragne, a distinguished French ecclesiastic. After serving for 20 years in France, he was given a leave by his Bishop in 1843, and he came to Louisiana for a rest, and to meet old friends who had come to Louisiana to serve as missionaries. He requested Bishop Blanc of New Orleans during that summer, for a temporary assignment in the country to escape the yellow fever in the city. Monseigneur Blanc requested him to look after the Catholics of Plaquemines Parish, and he accepted the task. He also made a tour of the whole area over a period of some three months, going from place to place. How much work he did may be realized from the fact that in a short time, he baptized 26 boys and 10 girls, children of free people of Color, and 28 slave children.

Abbe Baron d'Auragne performed his first Baptism at the *Quartier de Buras* and on August 10, 1843, baptized 14 persons. On September 13, he was at the home of Auguste Reggio, where 12 Baptisms were performed, and on the 14th, there were two at the DeBouchel home. Prior to that he had been at the Daunfort (Dunford) Plantation, at the Wederstrandts and at Pointe-a-la-Hache. He signed the records as "Pastor of Plaquemines". His last entry was dated October 1, 1843, for the Baptism of Alix Dragon, son of Charles Dragon and Pauline Auriac, who lived at Pointe-a-la-Hache. He was stricken by the very fever he had sought to avoid, and three days later, he expired, regretted by the people who learned to esteem him during the short period he had been in their midst.

Father Caretta Resumes His Visits

During the same month as the Abbe's death (October), Father Caretta resumed his ministrations to the people of Plaquemines, but his visits were scattered. However, in 1844, the zealous St. Bernard pastor made regular visits to the Lower Coast, approximately every month, spending several days each time. This continued into 1845 and early 1846 when visits were more frequent. During the two years, 1844 and 1845, Father Caretta performed eight marriages among the Colored, and from 1841 to 1846, 30 marriages among the white people, including some in the latter year by Father Savelli. Father Langlois' recapitulation for Baptisms from 1841 to 1846, for Father Caretta, including some by Father Savelli, shows a total of 158, 75 of whom were boys and 83 girls. The figures of Baptisms of free Colored show 51 baptized, 22 boys and 29 girls. Father Caretta continued to sign the records as pastor of St. Bernard and spiritual admin-

istrator of Plaquemines, but sometimes as "serving this Parish of Plaquemines".

The 1843 Catholic Directory covering the previous year, lists Rev. J. Caretta as pastor of St. Bernard "who attends the parish of Plaquemines, where a church is to be built."

However, Plaquemines Parish had definitely entered into a great period of development, with new plantations opening up, rice culture becoming widespread and population increasing. Bishop Blanc decided that the Lower Coast could not continue to be served as a missionary territory of St. Bernard, whose pastor, Abbe Caretta was already burdened with the care of the vast thriving St. Bernard area.



Present St. Thomas Church during the flood accompanying the hurricane of 1940

Rev. Nicholas Savelli

CHAPTER IV

By 1847, a writer in De Bow's Review could write about Plaquemines: "The parish, or, as it has of late years been jocosely called, 'the State of Plaquemines', as far down the river as Pointe-a-la-Hache, a distance of 50 miles, may be compared to a beautiful town with only one street, the great Mississippi." Lemon trees were already flourishing and since around the 1820s, orange trees had been planted. The upper part of the parish is referred to as in the highest state of cultivation, and beautiful plantation homes described as centers of hospitality by planters. Interspersed among these cane plantations were 200 or more rice plantations, many of them not more than two arpents wide at the river front. Thousands of hogsheads of sugar were produced by the plantations in the parish, and in a report for 1844 by the Secretary of the Treasury of Louisiana, the statement of M. Champomier, which was included, showed the principal plantations of the parish producing about 15,000 hogsheads of sugar that year.

Parish Produced Much Sugar

The principal sugar plantations in 1844 along the east bank of the river beginning 37 miles below New Orleans and going upstream, were listed by M. Champomier as follows: Colonati and Adams, Burland Brothers, Eslati Cornina, P. C. Wederstrand, A. Lesseps, Lizardi Brothers, Buford and Gordon, C. Reggio, F. Delery, M. Ribas, J. Saul, A. Lesseps, A. Lanaux, J. A. Morgan, and W. H. Morgan. On the west bank they were from a point 45 miles below the city coming up as follows: Isaac Osgood, George Johnson, J. B. Wilkinson, R. Wilkinson, Colonel Maunsel White, Montgomery and Company, Samuel Packwood, A. Dunford, W. Erskins, Bonaventure Bayhi, P. J. Fleytas, B. Bayhi, Bernard Marigny, Rapp and De-Blanc, Estate of M. Reggio, A. Villere, Estate of D. Urquhart, A. Gordon, A. and J. Denistoun and Company, Felix Villere, Jules Villere, Caliste Villere and D. Delacroix.

That year (1844) Lizardi Brothers with 897 hogsheads, and A. Lesseps with 800 topped the sugar plantations in point of production on the east bank. On the west bank, Samuel Packwood with 836 hogsheads, and Isaac Osgood with 658 had the highest production.

River Boats Served Plantations

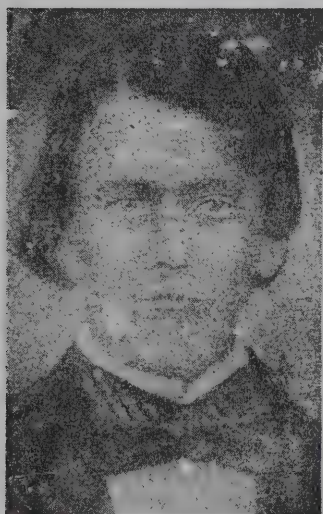
Boats were operating from New Orleans to the various landings of these plantations along the river, where they brought goods, luxuries and supplies from the city, and carried back sugar, rice, oranges and orange blossoms and truck. These boats also carried passengers to and from the plantations and the city. The plantations were in the days of their glory, entertainment and hospitality were lavish, lands were being developed and farms were stretching farther down the river.

Bishop Blanc, even though facing bitter attacks and opposition from the anticlerical elements of the time, gave close attention to the needs of the growing areas, such as Plaquemines Parish with its thousands of flour-

ishing plantations and "habitations", that were in dire need of regular and effective spiritual ministrations.

The owners and operators were eager to have their own church, more conveniently located for them than St. Bernard on the Shell Beach road. The work of Father Martin is evidence of an intention to establish a regular church parish as far back as 1834, but matters dragged for several years before conclusive action was taken. In 1842, Father Caretta is listed as "Pastor of St. Bernard of Terre-aux Boeufs, who visited occasionally the Parish of Plaquemines, where a church is to be built". The records of 1844 state: "Plaquemines—No church as yet". Finally, in 1845, definite action was taken, by the Bishop. The De Bouchel family owned a plantation on the west bank, and Monseigneur Blanc acted through Victor De Bouchel, seeking for a suitable piece of land.

This question of property was disposed of when Marie Gaultier, widow of Joseph Orrillas by her first marriage, and widow of Jean Joseph by her second marriage, generously made a donation of two lots of ground to Bishop Blanc on June 17, 1845, at a point designated as about 14 leagues below New Orleans on the left bank of the river. One lot measured 80 feet front and 520 in depth, and the other 215 feet front and 350 in depth. The property was bounded on one side by that of the donor, and on the other by the plantation of Charles Dragon. The lots were estimated at a value of \$200, and it was stipulated that they were given for the purpose of erecting a "Catholic, Roman and Apostolic Church". A mortgage that had been held by the donor's son, deceased, Jean Francois Joseph, and his sister, Dame Josephine Joseph, wife of Domingue Ragas, was settled and the property cleared. The transfer of the land was effected by Judge



Rev. Nicholas Savelli (above), first pastor of St. Thomas.

Very Rev. E. Rousselon (right), was Vicar General of the archdiocese when the parish was founded.



Charles Dutillet, and Victor DeBouchel accepted the property donated in the name of Bishop Blanc.

Some time late in 1845, Bishop Blanc received at New Orleans a young Italian priest, Rev. Nicholas Savelli, a scion of the famous Savelli family of Rome. For more than three years previously, he had served in the Diocese of St. Louis, then transferred to New Orleans. In April, 1846, Father Caretta, pastor of St. Bernard, after many years of arduous labors in the New Orleans diocese, was given a leave to visit his family in Europe. Bishop Blanc sent Father Savelli to St. Bernard to replace him temporarily, and to serve as pastor of Plaquemines. His name appears for the first time in the St. Bernard registers on December 3, 1845. His name is first found in the Plaquemines records for a Baptism on May 21, 1846.

Calls from Plantation to Plantation

Father Savelli, while serving St. Bernard gave considerable attention to Plaquemines Parish, more than any of his predecessors. He began, as others had done, to make calls from plantation to plantation, and it is said that while he did this, he began to collect funds to build a church for his new parish. The little pioneer church, said to have dated back to 1820, was evidently far too small and probably so dilapidated as to require demolition. Old-timers relate that it was only a temporary structure. In view of the current prosperity in the parish, Father Savelli must not have had much difficulty in obtaining funds from the affluent plantation owners. However, it is said that he gave much of his own money for the new church.

Just when the new Plaquemines church was built by Father Savelli is not recorded. The records of 1845 state that a new church was being built that year, but this was incorrect. The records of the following year (1846) state also: "Church now being built". It can be inferred from the church registers that the church constructed in 1847 was completed at the end of that year, because in 1846 and during 1847, Father Savelli signed the Plaquemines church books simply as *cure de la Paroisse de Plaquemines*, but on January 2, 1848, he signs for the first time: "I undersigned pastor of St. Thomas Church", and from then onward he signs in that manner. Another point is that Father Caretta did not return until the end of the year 1846, and it was only after this that Father Savelli took up his residence in Plaquemines and that he could devote his entire time to his parish, i. e., beginning with 1847.

New Church Was Attractive Edifice

The new church was a spacious and attractive edifice, which became the pride of Plaquemines Parish, and the people now came from all sections to attend services there. It was the only church between St. Bernard and the mouth of the river. The frame structure was topped by a steeple that became a landmark for ships plying the Mississippi. One of the features of the interior was a spacious choir. In the course of time, the church was fitted with stain-glass windows. The church was dedicated under the invocation of St. Thomas the Apostle, and he has remained the patron of the church to the present time. Over the main altar was a large and beautiful painting of St. Thomas, given to the church probably by a relative of Father Savelli's. The first St. Thomas church served Plaquemines until its destruction by a cyclone in 1898. It was erected on an Indian mound, and another mound nearby was used for the parish cemetery.

These mounds are characterized as the only Indian mounds below St. Bernard parish, in the geological survey of Plaquemines Parish.

Father Savelli officiated at his first funeral on December 11, 1847, when Theophile Manuel LeRiche, two year old son of Hipolite LeRiche and Pauline Ronquillo, was interred "in the cemetery of this parish." It was customary at the time for various plantations to have their own burial grounds, and frequent entries of burials in such private plots are recorded, especially on the west bank. Gradually, however, families set up in the parish cemetery. Reference to a cemetery at Jesuits' Bend is found for the first time in 1848, when on March 18, Father Savelli officiated at a funeral there.

Father Savelli's labors were not restricted to Pointe-a-la-Hache by any means. He visited the whole wide area of the parish, from Belle Chasse down the west bank, stopping at the Jesuits' Bend, Deer Range and Magnolia Plantation, at Quartier Ronquillo and down to Quartier Buras. On the east bank he made his visits from English Turn down, stopping at the Morgans, at Lanaux's, at Lesseps, at Reggio's, at Lizardi Brothers', at the Wederstrandts, at the Cornins' and others. He rectified marriages, instructed, baptized and offered Mass at various plantations when too far from Pointe-a-la-Hache.

Some time after 1848, the already vast territory in the care of Father Savelli was enlarged still further, when the Bishop directed him to visit the Barataria section. The lower end of that area had been visited by famous Father Menard of Thibodauxville and his assistants. In 1847, Rev. Claude Lunel, a newly ordained priest stationed at the Bishop's house on Chartres Street, New Orleans, was assigned to visit the Barataria section, but after a short period of very fruitful work, he died suddenly, and the territory was put in charge of Father Savelli. This entailed considerable traveling under the most primitive conditions.

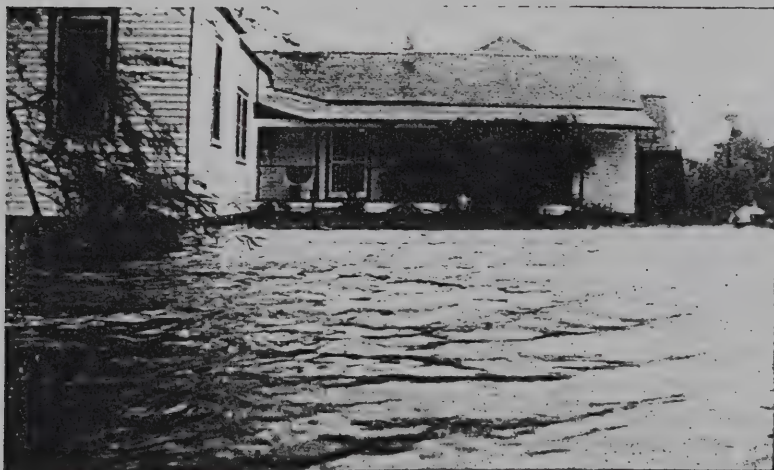
The year 1851 was an important one in the annals of the parish church, for on May 5, Archbishop Blanc made his first visitation and administered Confirmation in the new St. Thomas church for the first time. Thirty-seven persons were confirmed by the Archbishop, who, His Excellency noted in the parish registers, "by their pious recollection have attested to the zeal of the pastor in preparing them". To this, the Archbishop added: "We take pleasure finally, in encouraging the neatness of the church furnishings used for divine services."

In 1855, Father Savelli conducted a triduum for the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, carrying out directions of Archbishop Blanc, whose official letter he read in St. Thomas church on Sunday on which the exercises ended. Similar ceremonies were held in the parish church by Father Langlois in 1870 for the promulgation of the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope, carrying out the instructions of Archbishop Perche.

The effectiveness of Father Savelli's work may be judged from some statistics from the parish registers. During his first full year at Pointe-a-la-Hache (1848), he performed 176 Baptisms, indicating that he sought out

those who had not received this essential Sacrament and brought them into the fold of the Church. These entries show not only infants, but persons of all ages. In subsequent years, the annual number declined, but long remained over 100 per year. In 1856, Father Savelli's last full year as a pastor, his Baptisms totalled 114. For the entire period of his pastorate, from 1846 to 1857, the grand total of Baptisms is 1410. When he came in 1847, he had only eight marriages but in the following year (1848), the number had increased to 14, and each year the number grew larger, indicating his efforts to bring his flock to the necessity of Christian marriage and to check the common practice of marriages by justices of the peace, a practice that continued for decades to plague succeeding pastors.

On Saturday, October 3, 1857, Father Savelli's life came to a tragic end. His remains are said to have been interred in the parish cemetery, and this is borne out by an entry in the burial records for March 23, 1865, which states that on that day, Jean Goulvestre was buried by Father Langlois "*dans le cimetiere de l'eglise et dans la tombe dite M. Savelli . . .*"



Parish rectory at Pointe-a-la-Hache during the hurricane and flood of 1940.

Rev. A. Barthelemy Langlois

CHAPTER V

The appointment of a successor as pastor of St. Thomas church was a difficult matter for Archbishop Blanc. It would require a man of infinite tact, deep religious spirit and piety, and of high character to take up the work in Plaquemines Parish. Obstacles and discouragement would not be wanting, for besides the tremendous amount of work to be done over an immense territory, the new pastor would face a spirit of resentment and opposition.

Around Christmas time, in 1857, a 25-year-old priest, only six months ordained, landed from a river boat at Pointe-a-la-Hache, and wended his way to the deserted little rectory adjoining St. Thomas Church. No one welcomed him, no one met him. No one seemed inclined even to speak to him. His first Mass in St. Thomas Church was offered in an empty church. Inquiries about the congregation at a nearby saloon elicited only a sneer and a veiled threat. Such was the arrival of the second pastor of Pointe-a-la-Hache—Rev. Auguste Barthelemy Langlois, a priest who was destined to root the Faith in all corners of the far-flung reaches of the “Empire Parish”, and inculcate a spirit of reverence for the Church and her ministers, and lastly but notably, to bring fame to Plaquemines by his very presence and his botanical studies conducted there.

Came to America from France

Father Langlois was born at Chavaney, Department of the Rhone, France, April 24, 1832. After studying at Montbrisen, Loire, he decided to dedicate his priestly career to the missions of Louisiana, so he came to this country with Rev. Antoine Durier, who became pastor of Annunciation Church, New Orleans, and later the third Bishop of Natchitoches. He completed his studies at St. Mary of the West in Cincinnati, and received ordination at the hands of Archbishop Purcell, June 11, 1857. After six months stay in New Orleans, he was named by Archbishop Blanc to take the difficult post of pastor of Pointe-a-la-Hache. Thirty years were to elapse before he was transferred from there.

Performed First Marriage in 1858

Despite the hostile and disconcerting reception that he had received upon his arrival, Father Langlois was determined to push his work ahead successfully. It was slow, tedious and discouraging effort, beset with hostility, indifference, insult and suspicion, but there were many families that co-operated and proved an encouragement and a consolation. His first Baptism in the parish was that of Joseph Leonidas Martin, son of Simeon Martin and Rosalie Ragas. He performed no marriages before April 26, 1858. For that year, there were only 14 marriages, and he officiated at 11 funerals. The Baptisms, however, quickly grew in number and by the end of 1858, he had registered 146.

When Pere Langlois arranged for First Communion after he arrived,

he had only 11 children in the class, and he has preserved the names of these for us: Arthur Morelle, Ambroise Martin, Norbert Martin, Felix Duplessis, Jules Duplessis, Joseph Domingue, Clemens Lartigue, Armantine Martin, Joseph Miller, Melanie Dragon and Philomene Lafrance.

It wasn't long before the people began to realize the real worth of their new pastor, and to admire him for his piety, his energy, his devotion and his tireless work. Old-timers still talk of him today as "the best pastor they ever had", and that is the tradition that has been handed down about Pere Langlois.

Visited All Sections of Parish

When he found that his parishioners were slow in coming to church, he decided to go to them. His travels around his immense parish were nothing short of amazing. North, south, east, and west, he went by boat, on foot and by carriage, by any available means to the most remote sections, not only in Plaquemines Parish but westward to Barataria and even down to Cheniere Caminada and Grand Isle. Scarcely a plantation along the river but he visited, baptizing, instructing, rectifying marriages, and conducting services. His energy was astounding, but robust man that he was, he was able to endure much fatigue that the wearying trips entailed through swamps, along the river, down bayous, and along quagmires that were called roads.

Here and there among the entries in the registers, Father Langlois specified places where he officiated. For instance in 1858, he mentions Quartier Ronquillo, Quartier Barthelemy and Buras. His first Baptism at Anseaux-Jesuites is dated May 4, 1858, followed by several. When he made the rounds of the plantations, he gave attention to spiritual welfare of the slaves, and when he had properly instructed them on one plantation he performed Baptisms. In 1859, he baptized a number of them on William Erskin's Plantation, and later, 28 at Auguste Reggio's Plantation. In 1860, he wended his way westward to Barataria, and entries show him at Drouet's Plantation there, where he performed slave Baptisms.

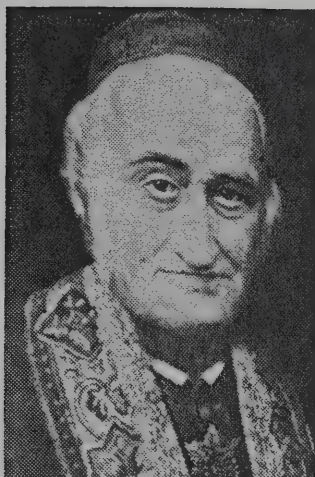
War Between the States Breaks Out

The summer of the year 1860 brought word of the sudden death of Archbishop Blanc. Pere Langlois offered a Mass of Requiem for his devoted friend at St. Thomas Church, and mingled with the prayers for the repose of that prelate's soul, were others for the averting of the fratricidal war between the North and the South that impended, for boats coming down the river and stopping at the town landing, had brought word of the national uproar. Plantation owners were uneasy. Groups gathered outside the church after Mass and views were freely exchanged over slavery, states' rights and secession.

Father Langlois continued with calm his labors and his seemingly endless trips around the plantations and back into the hinterland of swamps and bayous. The year 1861 brought information that the Bishop of Galveston, Monseigneur Jean Marie Odin, the Lazarist, had been named Archbishop of New Orleans. Father Langlois went up to New Orleans for the installation in May and made his obedience to the new Ordinary, but hastened back, alarmed at the news of the day. Still, he resumed his visits. Regardless of the civil war threatening, his task was to save souls. That



Rev. A. Barthelemy Langlois, second pastor of St. Thomas parish, served 30 years, from 1857 until the year 1887.



Archbishop Perche erected two parishes in Plaquemines in Father Langlois' time—Jesuits' Bend and Home Place.

year (1861) he gave Baptism to 25 slaves at *l'Habitation St. Anne*, belonging to Anton Elizardi, then stopping at a number of other places. Later that year, he returned to the Barataria territory and worked his way all the way down to Gand Isle in August, and crossed over to Cheniere Caminada. All along, he gave instructions, offered Mass at settlements and at "Habitations", performed marriages, rectifying some that had been contracted before the Justice of the Peace, and baptized many.

On one of these trips through the wilderness of lower Barataria, he almost forfeited his life. While in a boat wending his way through the interminable bayous and lakes, escorted by the operator of the boat, another vessel approached. In it was an outlaw, noted for his fatal marksmanship. He levelled his rifle to shoot the figure in the boat, but over the sight of his gun, he noted that the man was reading a book, and he concluded that ordinary people did not read books along the Barataria waterways. If the man was reading a book, it must be a prayer book, and if it was a prayer book, it must be a priest. As his boat approached the other, the outlaw quickly saw that he had been right, so he lowered his rifle and allowed the man reading his prayer book to pass unmolested. Some years later, when Pere Langlois visited the jail, he heard the story of his own narrow escape from the lips of the outlaw himself, finally brought to justice.

War had broken out now. From the plantations in his parish, one by one he saw young men leaving to join the various companies of rifles, batteries and guards. As he made the rounds, familiar faces were missing. Always it was the same story: "He's gone up to New Orleans, Pere, to join the Orleans Guards", or "He went up on the Ceres last week to enlist with the Pointe Coupee Battery". Then early in 1862, the whole Lower

Coast was electrified by the news that sped up the river from plantation to plantation. Owners and residents had watched the Confederate boats speeding down the river to man Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson, ships filled with gray uniforms, and gunboats waiting for Admiral Farragut's fleet that was approaching the mouth of the Mississippi. Now they waited the outcome of the decisive struggle that would determine the fate not only of New Orleans above, but also their own.

Federals Come Up the Mississippi

Finally on a clear sunny day in April, watchers lying cautiously on the crest of the so-called levees, saw the Federal gunboats steaming up the river. Over at Deer Range from the mansard windows, the Maunsell White family saw them too with alarm, packed their belongings and left hastily for the interior. Other plantation owners had sent their families inland too. War was here and what it might bring, none knew or dared to think about. But except for one raid by Confederate troops on one plantation whose owner had Union sympathies and foraging parties from the Federal ships, Plaquemines Parish remained quiet after the bitter battle at the forts in Plaquemines Bend, and the retreat of the Confederates up the river road.

Despite the turmoil, Archbishop Odin came to Pointe-a-la-Hache and administered Confirmation for the first time since his installation.

In 1863 came instructions from Archbishop Odin that every church in the diocese conduct Forty Hours' Devotion for the restoration of peace, and Father Langlois faithfully carrying out His Excellency's orders, thus conducted in St. Thomas Church for the first time, this devotion of the Forty Hours. He continued his tours of the parish, but restricted his activities to the river banks, calling only at the plantations. He carried on his work among the slaves, but after a group Baptism of 15 slaves at Auguste Lesseps', and 21 at Dunford's in 1862, and 11 at Erskine's in 1863, this work came to an abrupt end. The Emancipation Proclamation had been announced, and in most places Negroes streamed from plantations under instructions of Federal officers. A gloom of despondency settled down on the parish and most planters and rice growers felt that they were ruined. Some sold out and moved to New Orleans. Unfortunately, some were paid in Confederate paper money, which was soon worthless. Poverty and actual want gradually spread over the parish, and the great plantation homes that once echoed to grand dinners and brilliant social events, were now still, and strangely quite deserted. Such were the scenes and conditions that Pere Langlois encountered as he made his way around the parish in 1863. Church activities dwindled perceptibly. Many parishioners had left.

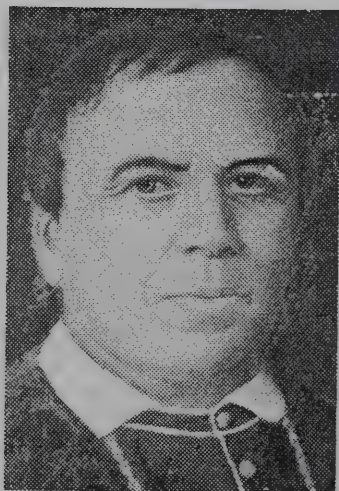
Parish Statistics Reveal Pastor's Labors

Between December 25, 1857, when he first came, until December 14, 1863, a period of six years, Father Langlois performed 557 white Baptisms—275 boys and 282 girls—and 420 Colored Baptisms—221 boys and 199 girls. After the entries for 1860, Father Langlois noted that the average age for all those buried from the church that year was 33 years and seven months. The 23 burials of 1866, he noted, represented an average age of 24 years, nine months and 15 days.

The bell for the first church was donated by Bernard Savoie, who was also the godfather when the bell was blessed.

In 1864, when one of the river boats made its customary stops at Pointe-a-la-Hache, Father Langlois was greeted by one of his confreres, a recently ordained priest, who had come from France—Rev. Mathurin Harnais. Father Langlois had directed to the attention of Archbishop Odin the immense expanse of his parochial territory and impossibility of doing justice to the thousands of Catholics scattered all over it, from Chandeleur Sound to Bayou Barataria and from Belle Chasse to the river's mouth and way off to Grand Isle. This he did not only in 1862 when the Archbishop came for Confirmation, but also in his annual reports. In view of this, Archbishop Odin, in 1864, cut off from St. Thomas parish the territory below Socola Canal down to the mouth of the river, and erected in it a new parish, with the seat located at Buras. Father Langlois went to Buras to handle the purchase of ground for the new church. This was the first division of the original parochial territory of St. Thomas Church of Pointe-a-la-Hache. To serve this new parish, the Archbishop sent Father Harnais, and on his way down-river he paused to notify Father Langlois, who extended to him not only Godspeed, but also sympathy and bade him to take courage. From then on, the lower third of Plaquemines parish was a distinct Catholic parish and it has a history all its own, written a few years ago by Rev. Robert Wilken, O.F.M., under the title, "Crosses on the Delta".

For seven years already, Father Langlois had been laboring in the Archdiocese, without any respite of leave. He and his intimate friend and countryman, Father Antoine Durier of Annunciation Church, New Orleans, requested the Archbishop for a leave for a vacation, and this the prelate



Archbishop Odin erected the Buras parish, the first carved from the territory of St. Thomas Parish.



Rev. Mathurin Harnais was the first Buras pastor, a friend of Father Langlois.

readily granted. Father Langlois was absent for five months, from June through October, 1864, and during his absence, Rev. Aristide Plotin replaced him at Pointe-a-la-Hache.

Upon his return, Father Langlois took up his work with customary vigor and energy. Archbishop Odin planned to come for Confirmation during the following year, and Father Langlois began instructing a class of candidates. When that prelate came, Father Langlois presented a class of 83 for Confirmation. The visit offered an opportunity to Father Langlois to call attention of the Archbishop to the vast amount of work to be done, and the long absences that he was forced to make from Pointe-a-la-Hache, while making long journeys around the parish, which sometimes kept him away as much as two months at a time. The Archbishop promised him an assistant, but it was not until the next year that a vicar was given to the parish. Later that summer, Father Langlois left again for a tour of the west bank and Barataria, which brought him all the way down to Grand Isle.

While he was at Deer Range in June, 1866, he baptized in the Maunsell White home. Albert Sydney White, son of Maunsell White and Bettie Ford. On June 20, he performed Baptisms also at Dobard's place. Three years later, 1869, Rev. Benedict Neithart, C.Ss.R., the Redemptorist, was at the Deer Range Plantation, and while there he baptized Joseph Maunsell White, son of Maunsell White and Heloise Laronde, who had been born in 1831. The godmother was Amanda June Bradford. The Maunsell White Plantation home was used as a chapel and services were held there when Father Langlois and later pastors visited the vicinity.

In the year 1866, Father Langlois had 23 burials at Pointe-a-la-Hache. The next year, 1867, saw New Orleans ravaged by a yellow fever epidemic and the plague spread down into Plaquemines Parish. This is reflected in the burials that year which soared up to 44. Several prominent persons were listed among the victims of the epidemic, including faithful Dr. Williams from Ronquillo and his young son.

Father Langlois on March 14, 1867, had first Communion in the home of Jacques Ancard at Quartier Ronquillo, when there were four in the class. He returned to Pointe-a-la-Hache as Archbishop Odin was coming for Confirmation. Twenty children made their first Communion in St. Thomas Church and all received Confirmation at the hands of Archbishop Odin, on April 28, 1867. After this Father Langlois resumed his visits on the west bank, calling at Jesuits' Bend, and at Deer Range on June 27, where he had a First Communion class.

It was in 1867 that St. Thomas parish was given its first assistant priest. This was Rev. Jules Bertholin, a young priest from France, who was destined to return later again as assistant and eventually as pastor. Father Bertholin remained until the following year (1868), when he was assigned to Breaux Bridge until 1876. While he was at St. Thomas, he assisted Father Langlois in visiting the distant missions, thus relieving him of a heavy burden, but Father Langlois never gave up his own visits around the parish until the time of his transfer, continuing his journeys from place to place, indicating his energy, his zeal and deep interest in the welfare of his flock. Everyone in Plaquemines knew Father Langlois, and that held good too for the Barataria section and the coast marshes and islands.

Father Langlois and the Post-War Era

CHAPTER VI

After the War Between the States, the Parish of Plaquemines suffered not only from poverty, but also from the effects of the carpetbag invasion that brought misgovernment, misery, bitterness, squandering of public funds and political turmoil. The Parish was saddled with a debt of more than \$68,000, to cover which the Police Jury issued bonds and imposed a tax of 6 mills on the dollar. Plaquemines was then probably known quite widely as the Empire Parish. Effort was being made for a return to prosperity by the plantation owners. Rice and sugar were still the mainstays, and orange groves were coming into their own, gradually spreading everywhere. In 1869, some of the orange trees on the west bank were referred to as already 40 years old.

Coast boats were again making stops at all river landings. Among these were the Myrtie of Captain Basset, and the propeller boat Hunter. At these landings, an account of the time states, they discharged goods, groceries, furniture and agricultural implements.

Forerunner of Modern Tractor Is Used

Among the plantations referred to as operating was Magnolia, then owned by H. Effingham Lawrence, who it is said, had lost immensely by the war and by the act of emancipation. But Lawrence, faced by the alternative of finding some revolutionary means of cultivating his broad acres or abandoning sugar culture, decided upon a plan that drew many plantation owners to Magnolia. He brought from England two steam locomotives to which were attached wide-based wheels, and between them were arranged batteries of plows, attached to the locomotives. This was called a steam plow—forerunner of the modern tractor.

One of the visitors, on a call at the Jeusits' Bend (1869), refers to the venerable trees, "standing there, planted by the Jesuits before any of the present inhabitants of Louisiana were born".

Parish Had Many Rice Farms

Below Magnolia Plantation were many rice fields, and that section was then called Riceland. There were two rice mills in the parish, one of them the Empire Parish Rice Mill, just across from this plantation. The yield in Plaquemines Parish in rice was about 15 barrels per acre, a barrel containing 162 pounds. Chinese labor was imported to work in the rice fields, and these generally gave satisfaction. Pledges to the church at one time were based on payment in barrels of rice.

The parish was then developing an excellent trade with New Orleans in orange blossoms, where these were made into syrup, also as a calmant preparation, known as *Syrop de Fleur d'Orange*, which was given to irritable babies. The blossoms sold at 25c per pound. Sometimes the blossoms in a single orange grove were sold to New Orleans for \$500.

Among other plantations referred to in 1869 and 1870 were the Mary,

Catherine, Harlem and Bel Air. On the east bank was the Fairview, while across the river were the New Hope, Bonaventure Bayhi's and Laussade's. The French tradition, still strong at the time, is revealed in the name of one of the stores, *Au Repos des Voyageurs*, on property formerly belonging to Pierre Molard, later to J. P. Crouere. Edward Butler was then recorder and James Faulhouze was parish Judge.

Such was a picture of the parish and conditions as it appeared to Father Langlois at the end of the half decade that followed the dismal war between the North and South. Labor was extremely short, and that presented a serious problem to the many large plantations. It was a period of political and economical upheavals, and drastic adjustments. Undoubtedly, Father Langlois proved a wise counsellor in those times and a source of encouragement and sound advice to many of his distracted parishioners.

Father Joseph Gaillet Becomes Assistant

After Father Bertholin was transferred, the Archbishop in 1869, sent a newly ordained French priest to serve as assistant to Father Langlois. This was Rev. Joseph Gaillet, whose brother was pastor of Our Lady of Good Harbor at Buras. Young Father Gaillet took up his work at Pointe-a-la-Hache with zeal and energy.

The Catholics in the Ronquillo section and the Gillot Settlement were served by Father Joseph, who seems to have assisted his brother also. In fact, the records are confusing as to whether he was officially an assistant at St. Thomas or at Buras, but the fact remains that he signed as assistant at St. Thomas. According to "Crosses on the Delta" by Rev. Robert Wilken, O.F.M., there was a house chapel at Adrien Lanaux's plantation, one-half mile above the present church of Home Place. This chapel was swept into the river during the storm of 1871. In 1870, Archbishop Perche, who had just succeeded Archbishop Odin (deceased in France), ordered Father Joseph Gaillet "to establish a parish at Ronquillo". After the storm, the area was without a chapel, so (Father Robert writes) services were held in private homes, but especially in the school on Mrs. Bremond's land. Father Joseph continued his ministrations at Home Place until 1876, when he returned to France to regain his shattered health, but he came back to Pointe-a-la-Hache in 1877 as assistant. He remained only a year, for becoming ill again, he returned to France and died there in October, 1881. Meanwhile the people of that territory went to work to build themselves a parish church, among them, zealous Mrs. O'Brien.

Two Parochial Societies Organized

Father Langlois ventured into a new field in his parish work in 1868, feeling that the time was opportune for this move. This was organization of two parochial societies, one for men: The Society of Perseverance Under the Patronage of St. Joseph, and the other for women: Society of Perseverance Under the Patronage of St. Philomena. He felt that these organizations would serve to draw both men and women closer to the Church, maintain greater interest in their religion and in their parish, and induce them to lead better Christian lives. As a matter of fact, the prime purpose of both organizations was self-sanctification.

The St. Joseph Society was established at St. Thomas Church on January 1, 1868, and its constitution stated that its purpose was for the propaga-

tion of Christian teaching by the exercise of Christian charity, spiritual and corporal, towards one's neighbors. It was open to Catholics only. Dues were 25c monthly. An annual Mass was offered for the deceased members of the society. Members were pledged to approach the Sacraments regularly and to attend meetings monthly on the first Sunday of each month, also wakes and funerals. At a meeting of the Society on October 3, 1869, members agreed to build a permanent tomb to bury its members, and each pledged to pay \$10 or to donate two barrels of rice.

The first officers of the society were Father Langlois, pastor, director; Felix Duplessis, president; Myrtille Lacroix, first vice-president; Edouard Sylvain, second vice-president; Aquilo Moliere, treasurer; Joseph Cornim, assistant treasurer, and Martin Duplessis, zelator. The latter died in office, and he was replaced by Jean Daniel, but he also died and Charles Martin took his place. There were 25 charter members.

The St. Philomena Society was established on July 1, 1868, at St. Thomas Church, with 30 charter members. It continued to function until January 1, 1907. Like the men's organization, the St. Philomena Society also erected a tomb and membership included privilege of burial in this tomb, besides services of a doctor. There was a High Mass annually on the feast of St. Philomena, through a subscription, but the regular dues were 25c per month.

The first officers were listed as follows by the director, Father Langlois: "Mesdames and Mesdemoiselles Jacques Moliere, president; Edouard Sylvain, vice-president; Edmond Declouet, treasurer; Olympe Hill, secretary; Charles Tinson, zelatrice and Jean Daniel, assistant zelatrice. In 1869, the officers were as follows: Mesdames Myrtille Lacroix, president; Olympe Hill, secretary; Charles Martin, zelatrice and Widow Jean Daniel, zelatrice. The last active members listed by Father Colle in 1905 were "Madame Castani and Alphonsine Cornim".



This picture was taken decades ago when J. B. Hingle taught school in the Parish.

It is not known if the Children of Mary was organized by Father Langlois or by Father Bertholin, but by 1892, there were some 30 members, who paid dues of 10 cents per month. They were affiliated with the St. Philomena Society for the use of the society's tomb for burials.

In 1868, Father Langlois made an unusual entry in the register of funerals: "In the year of Our Lord, 1868, the 23rd of December, I undersigned pastor of St. Thomas Church, Parish of Plaquemines, solemnly interred in the cemetery of the church, and in the tomb of the family of Adam Frederick, the body of Marie Cornibee, deceased the previous day at the plantation of Adam Frederick, in the odor of sanctity, and after having received all the Sacraments and consolations of the Church, at the age of—A. B. LANGLOIS, Cure."

Aged Parishioner Died Before Altar

Inquiries about Miss Cornibee, whom Father Langlois referred to as having died "in the odor of sanctity", has discovered little about her. Although the entry leaves her age blank, it is stated by old-timers that she was about 35 years old. They relate that during her last agony, she asked Father Langlois, who ministered to her, if a person goes through the sufferings of Purgatory here, must one go through them again in the other world, but the good priest consoled her and assured her that she would not.

Another unusual entry is that of the sudden death of Anicette Solis, aged 81, at the foot of St. Joseph's altar in St. Thomas church on November 4, 1877. Father Langlois anointed her and next day buried her in the parish cemetery.

The Redemptorist Fathers at the request of Father Langlois, conducted a mission at St. Thomas Church beginning on January 23, 1870, and seven persons made their First Communion. The Redemptorists came back in subsequent years for missions and accomplished a great deal of good, bringing back many to the Sacraments.

Jesuits' Bend Becomes Parish

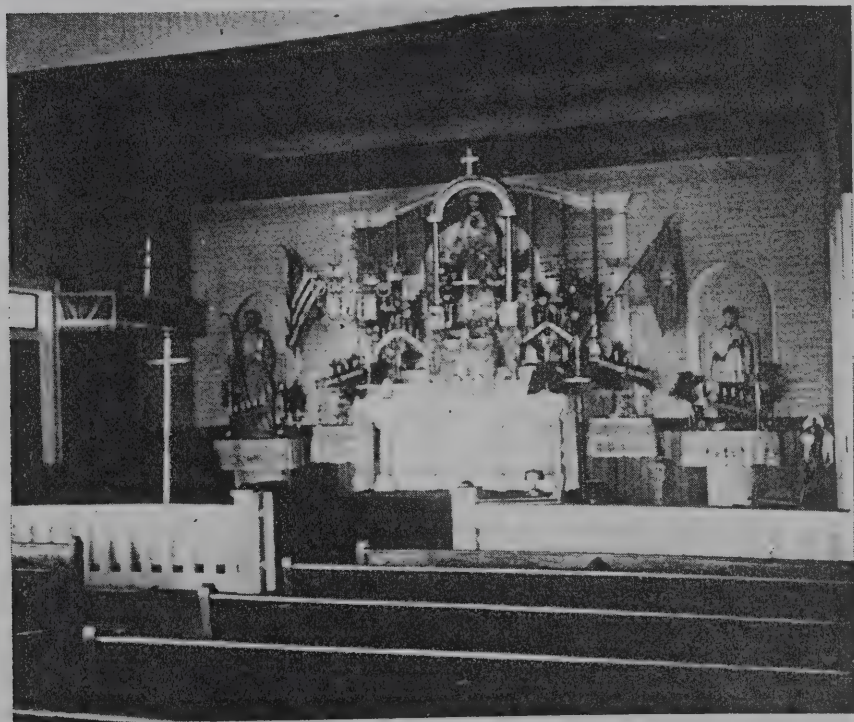
In spite of his many duties at home, Father Langlois, as already noted, certainly did not neglect the scattered settlements and many plantations with their large number of Catholics. Among the points he had visited regularly almost from the very beginning of his pastorate, was ancient Jesuits' Bend. Father Savelli too, had visited that section and officiated there, performing one of the first burials in the old cemetery at that point. The number of Catholics there induced Father Langlois to prevail upon Archbishop Perche to permit him to erect a church at Anse-aux-Jesuites for their convenience. This was begun in 1870, and by 1871, the new church was put into service, and dedicated under the invocation of St. Cecilia.

Archbishop Perche appointed Rev. Dominic Crespín as the first resident pastor in 1871, and the Parish of Jesuits' Bend was erected, covering the upper west bank territory of Plaquemines that was not in the Parish of St. Patrick at Ronquillo (Home Place). Father Crespín was given charge of the Baratania area also. This was the third parish to be carved out of the original territory of St. Thomas of Pointe-a-la-Hache. Father Langlois was now left with an area along the east bank, but not for very long. Father

Gaillet had gone to Ronquillo and Father Langlois was left without an assistant until 1878, handling the whole parish alone, now that he was relieved of the wide territory on the other side of the river.

Having set aside some funds, and feeling that the need of expanding the parish church property, Father Langlois on July 12, 1870, bought an irregular piece of land for \$2000 from Jules Ragas. This land had a front of one arpent by an ordinary depth of 40 arpents. It was bounded by the land of Bernard Savoie, Pierre B. Dragon and the church property. In the sale, Father Langlois represented Archbishop Perche. Ragas declared he had acquired the property from the Dominique Ragas on October 7, 1858.

It was during this period that Father Langlois turned his attention to studies that were destined to bring him national fame. While he was only 16 years of age, he had begun botanical studies, and made an herbarium consisting of some 1200 to 1300 plants which he collected in the vicinity of his college at Montbrison. When he was assigned to Pointe-a-la-Hache, he renewed his plant studies, and sent a collection of about 300 Louisiana plants to France for clasification, but he received no reply. Since he was stationed in an area that made contact with other botanists difficult and since libraries were lacking too, Father Langlois gave up, and used his spare moments reading and studying theology, preferring his books and his religious and scientific research to social contacts.



Old-timers well remember the interior of the second St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache, shown above, and rebuilt during the pastorate of Father Colle.

However, in 1877, he again directed his attention to that subject that always gave him keen delight—botany. He began the collection, study and classification of plants of all types that he found in abundance in the fertile soil of Plaquemines and along the bayous and coulees, and in the swamps, which he visited so often in his missionary tours. Many of these were not classified and many new varieties were brought to light. Between 1877 and his death in 1900, Father Langlois collected some 20,000 specimens, many of them from Plaquemines Parish. In 1887, the year he left Pointe-a-la-Hache, Father Langlois published a catalogue of plants of lower Louisiana. A pale blue Louisiana violet has been named after this distinguished botanist . . . *Viola Langloisii*. Once he had begun his botanical studies again, Father Langlois, it is said by old-timers, constantly asked his parishioners, mosspickers, fishermen, wood-choppers and dwellers in remote sections, to bring him unusual plants and flowers, which all of them did gladly and thus he was able to add considerably to his store of plants. Part of his collection was given to the Catholic University of America at Washington and the herbarium there has been named in his memory—the Langlois Herbarium. His knowledge of soil, plant life and growing things in general proved highly valuable and he was often able to advise planters. He campaigned against cutting down of the cypress trees by lumber concerns from the North, as he felt that those trees served as a barrier against cold blasts from the North accompanying frosts. He opposed deforestation and advocated conservation of natural resources. When the Catholic Winter School was conducted at New Orleans for a number of years in the 1890's Father Langlois was a regular lecturer. He lectured also at De Paul University in Chicago. Father Langlois rendered Louisiana a tremendous service with his botanical studies, and Plaquemines Parish can be proud that the bulk of his work was done in that section. He was unquestionably Louisiana's outstanding scientist in his field, and he ranks among the nation's greatest, but is also internationally famous.

Resumes Care of Vast Territory

However, despite their value and calls on his time, Father Langlois never allowed these to interfere with his parochial duties as the records of the parish so eloquently testify. After the departure of Father Gaillet from Ronquillo, St. Patrick's Parish returned to Pointe-a-la-Hache as a dependency. Burdened again with distant territory to serve, Father Langlois in 1878 was given an assistant. This was no newcomer, for it was none other than Father Jules Bertholin who had served here before. He assisted Father Langlois until 1881, serving at Ronquillo and at other points in the wide territory, besides at Pointe-a-la-Hache. Sometimes when the priest at Anse-aux-Jesuites was absent, Father Bertholin journeyed thither and served the people. Both he and Father Langlois kept busy with constant sick calls and funerals during the tragic year 1878, when yellow fever ravaged the parish. The funeral registers for that year list 49 funerals at Pointe-a-la-Hache alone, most of them within the epidemic months, July to October, and almost double the normal number of church burials. Father Bertholin crossed the river in response to calls and performed fu-

nerals there too. The pastor of Buras was also a victim of the plague, and thither Father Langlois hastened to help the stricken people.

The following year (1879) when Jesuits' Bend was without pastor, Father Langlois went there to serve the parishioners and even made his way to Barataria and down to Grand Isle again. By 1880, Father Langlois found himself practically in the same situation as he had been in former years, once more having charge of the Catholics in the whole civil parish except the Buras territory. Father Bertholin after St. Cecilia's at Jesuits' Bend. Eventually he was placed in charge of that parish as administrator.

Conducted Many Parish Festivals

Father Langlois kept the church property in excellent shape, constantly making improvements. On many occasions, he conducted church fairs to raise the necessary funds and to make up for deficits in the regular collections. Boats came from New Orleans for these festivals, which became gala affairs, and noted for all the hospitality, geniality, good things to eat and lavishness of all *les bonnes choses de la campagne*. Ladies of the old families outdid themselves on these occasions in making plans and preparations and providing a wealth of food and articles for sale and raffles. Two rival river captains were present at one of these fairs, when a cake made by one of the ladies was being auctioned. It wasn't long before both realized they were rival bidders, so the offerings quickly ran up and soon they were the only bidders. The cake—probably the most expensive ever sold in Plaquemines Parish—went off to one of the captains for \$300. St. Thomas Church was the real winner!

The last Society organized by Pere Langlois was the Young Men's Benevolent Association, in March, 1884. Its purpose was for the defraying of burial costs.

St. Patrick's Church at Home Place was finally completed in 1883, when Rev. A. Borias, who signs himself as assistant priest, was placed in charge. He had been there since the spring of the year 1882. Father Langlois was there on August 5 of that year to baptize the daughter of Alexis Martin. Some time after April, 1883, Father Borias, who had been named *pastor pro tem*, was transferred, and once more Father Langlois made his calls at Quartier Ronquillo. However, not long after, he was relieved of this mission, when Rev. P. J. Hèaly was named "assistant priest" for St. Patrick's Church at Home Place. From then on St. Patrick's had its own priest most of the time, until it was taken over by the Buras parish.

Native Towns Registered in Records

In 1883, we find Father Langlois at Quartier Barthelemy, Quartier Ronquillo and St. Sophie. The custom arose of inserting the place of residence of the persons baptized, and among those mentioned between 1883 and 1887, are found Grande Prairie, Petit Prairie (many from that point), Harlem Plantation, Quarantine, Pointe Michel, Monsecour Place, Myrtle Grove, Wood Park, and of course, Pointe-a-la-Hache. During the year 1886, the last full year during which Father Langlois served, there were 167 Baptisms registered.

Just at the close of his administration as pastor, Father Langlois witnessed the realization of a long-cherished dream of planters and business people of Plaquemines Parish. This was the completion of the railroad

line to Pointe-a-la-Hache on July 2, 1887. The line had been extended from Poydras by the New Orleans and Gulf Railroad Company, and was annexed to that portion of the road operating then from New Orleans to Shell Beach. However, operations did not last very long at the time. The company was succeeded by the New Orleans and Southern Railroad Company, Inc., on April 8, 1891. In 1896, that section of the railroad from Belair to Bohemia was abandoned and the tracks were taken up. The road was restored in 1911 to Bohemia by the Louisiana Southern Railway Company, but again discontinued in 1938.

Shortly after Archbishop Leray had just died suddenly in France, Father Langlois was sent to St. Martinville, La., to assume the important pastorate of St. Martin's Church. His last entry in the records of the Pointe-a-la-Hache church is on October 2, 1887. Within a few days, he packed his belongings and bade farewell to the people of Plaquemines Parish, whom he had served so conscientiously and zealously since 1857—just a few weeks short of 30 years, the longest pastorate in the annals of St. Thomas parish.



This view of the third St. Thomas Church of Pointe-a-la-Hache, the present structure, before the steeple was cut, shows the mound on which it is erected.

Rev. Jules Bertholin

CHAPTER VII

SINCE May, 1881, Rev. Jules Bertholin had been attending St. Cecilia's Church at Jesuits' Bend, and long prior to that, during 1867 and 1868, he had served as assistant pastor at St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache. So when he was appointed pastor of the latter church, to succeed Father Langlois, it was certainly not as a stranger that he came. Parishioners welcomed back an old friend, whom they had known for many years. Everyone knew him along both sides of the river, from Home Place to Anse-Aux-Jesuites, and from Bohemia to Belair.

His name first appears in the St. Thomas records for a Baptism on October 23, 1887, just three weeks after the departure of Pere Langlois. He continued to have charge of St. Cecilia's church at Jesuits' Bend, and divided his time between that parish, St. Thomas and other points on the west bank to Quartier Barthelemy. St. Patrick's at Home Place remained under the care of Father Healy until 1890, when Rev. Christophe Cuny became pastor.

Pastor's Administration Was Uneventful

Father Bertholin's administration of six years was quiet and singularly uneventful. It was marked by a sharp decline in religious statistics. During his first full years as pastor, 1888, the records show only 90 Baptisms. By 1892, these had declined to 83. In 1888, there were only eight marriages and in 1892, these had risen to 18. The 1889 records show 21 Catholic burials.

He is remembered for the large church festivals that he conducted to provide necessary funds, following the policy of his predecessor, Father Langlois.

One of the outstanding events of his pasorate was the construction of the railroad on the west bank. The road was promoted by the late ex-Governor H. C. Warmoth and other sugar planters of the west bank in the late 1880's. Construction work was begun in 1889, and in 1890, operations started over a 40-mile stretch from Algiers to Socola Canal, and about two miles below Governor Marmoth's Magnolia Plantation. The line was known as the New Orleans, Fort Jackson and Grand Isle Railroad, but the name changed several times, now being the New Orleans and Lower Coast Railroad, a part of the Missouri Pacific Lines. According to Edward W. Burgis, who was employed on the line, 1890 to 1917, immediately after the tracks reached the Socola Canal, the road in 1890 was extended to Buras, but it never reached Fort Jackson, some five miles further.

A survey of church property in 1890 in Plaquemines Parish, during Father Bertholin's administration, states that there were four Catholic Churches in the parish, having a seating capacity of 450, and a value of \$5,500. Catholic population at the time is listed at 3,036. The four churches



Rev. Theodore Koeller, S.V.D., pastor, and Rev. Jerome Haines, S.V.D., assistant, St. Thomas Church, attended the diamond jubilee ceremonies of Our Lady of Good Harbor Parish in 1939—the first parish carved out of St. Thomas Parish.

of the time were St. Thomas at Pointe-a-la-Hache; Our Lady of Good Harbor at Buras; St. Cecilia's at Jesuits' Bend; and St. Patrick's at Home Place. Both the seating capacity and the church valuation appear to be much below what they should have been.

Catechism Teachers Are Remembered

Among the old-timers who are remembered as having taught catechism were John B. Hingle, Mrs. Etta Gravolet and Mrs. Palmira Ragas.

Father Bertholin continued the parish societies: St. Philomena's Society, St. Joseph's Society, the Scapular Society, the Young Men's Benevolent Association and the Children of Mary. He allowed the members of the latter group to affiliate with the former and to have the right to use the St. Philomena Society's tomb for burials. The sodalists at the time, paid dues of 10 cents per month, and the St. Philomena members paid 25 cents per month.

The St. Thomas Parish records from 1888 to 1890, show Baptisms of persons from a number of localities including Belair, Junior and Grande Prairie. All of the Baptisms, marriages and funerals of Jesuits' Bend were kept in the registers of St. Cecilia's Church there, while Fathers Healy and Father Cuny, his successor, kept records at Home Place.

Father Bertholin Is Transferred

Archbishop Janssens had succeeded Archbishop Leray in 1888, and he undertook the reorganization of the archdiocesan corporation and church property. But before this was effected, the Archbishop transferred Father Bertholin. He made his last entry at St. Thomas on August 8, 1893, and moved just in time to avoid one of the worst tragedies in the history of Plaquemines. He died the following year. His last entry in the Jesuits' Bend records appears on August 10, 1892. Archbishop Janssens suppressed St. Cecilia's as a parish, and once more it became a mission of Pointe-a-la-Hache.



This view from the levee shows the second St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache, with the rectory adjoining the church, and the cemetery to the right.

Rev. Frederick Colle

CHAPTER VIII

THE next pastor of St. Thomas Church of Pointe-a-la-Hache was a French priest, who had served as pastor of St. Elizabeth Church at Paincourtville, La., and just previously had served as assistant at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church at New Orleans. This was Rev. Frederick Colle, who was assigned to Plaquemines Parish by Archbishop Janssens as part of the plan of reorganization of the archdiocese, which was then under way. He arrived in the early part of September, 1893, and on the 9th of that month, he registered his first Baptism.

Father Colle was a devoted priest, a man of piety and a conscientious pastor, though inclined to timidity and lacking in health. He believed in parish organization and Catholic activities, and above all, he was devoted to the beautification of the house of God, but his efforts met with little response. The words of the Psalmist were his guide: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." However, for his personal needs and for his residence, Father Colle was little concerned, in fact, he was indifferent to the point of neglect, so much so, that the parishioners, so little accustomed to Father Colle ever asking for anything, gave little thought to this phase of his life, failed in their support to him and the parish church, and Father Colle actually suffered need. The Livaudais family were among the loyal ones who did something to help him.

Conditions Draw Prelate's Rebuke

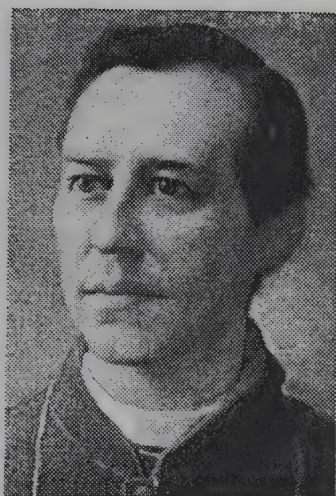
This was reflected also in lack of attention to the needs of the parish church. The conditions that developed in consequence, drew from Archbishop Blenk a rebuke on the occasion of his visitation in 1912. He stated that he found a state of affairs that was quite unsatisfactory, pointing out the lack of conveniences in the rectory, but, he continued, "the sacred vessels, the vestments, the Way of the Cross, and the other church furnishings, such as the harmonium, are not at all up to the ordinary requirements of decency."

His Excellency recommended immediate replacement of the worn and soiled vestments, and regilding of the chalice, monstrance and ciboria, besides repairing of the thurible. He then urged the pastor and parishioners to strive earnestly to "put the house of God and everything therein in condition which would be less unworthy of the great God Who dwells in the tabernacle." After words of praise for the spirit of generosity manifested by Mr. and Mrs. O. Livaudais, the Archbishop deplored "the beggarly income of the Reverend Pastor," who was forced to live in extreme poverty. He concluded his official entry in the parish records with the hope that at his next visitation, his suggestions and recommendations would have been carried out, and that the poverty of the rector and the poor appearance of the things used in the church would be remedied.

Just a month after his arrival, Father Colle and his parishioners suf-



Rev. Frederick Colle served St. Thomas Church for 19 years and built the second parish church.



Archbishop Janssens had the Church of St. Thomas incorporated under state laws in 1894.

ferred a harrowing experience. On the night of October 1, 1893, the howling hurricane of Cheniere Caminada blew inland over Plaquemine Parish, and within a few hours, debris was scattered up and down the river, with many bodies in the wreckage. The steeple was blown down from St. Thomas Church, slates were ripped off the roof and windows were blown in, permitting a deluge of rain to sweep into the edifice. Fortunately, the church as not destroyed, and after the great storm, Father Colle rallied the parishioners, and he was able to repair the church. Damage was widespread in the parish, and scarcely a plantation or a home in Plaquemines that was not damaged. Father Bedel at Buras buried more than 300 bodies in his parish area. Archbishop Janssens visited the area and distributed relief.

St. Thomas Church, however, was saved for only another five years, as in 1898, a cyclone struck the area, and the historic old parish church was completely levelled. This was the first church built in 1847, by Father Savelli. When the wind had spent itself, only the floor of the edifice remained; in the middle of it was found the sanctuary lamp, still burning. Pieces of the church building were found scattered for miles around—even as far as Delacroix Island. Fortunately, the bell was recovered. Father Colle was pulled out from debris at the rectory, but he was only slightly injured. He was taken care of by the F. S. Hingle family, while he recovered from his injuries. Mass was offered in the Hingle home for several Sundays.

Father Colle proceeded to rebuild the church, but it was much smaller than the first edifice. This new frame building was surmounted by a steeple. The fine baptistery in this second church was donated by the loyal and generous Livaudais family. Many statues were also donated and installed in the rebuilt church, among them St. Philomena, St. Aloysius

Gonzaga, St. Simon Stock, St. Anthony, St. Barbara and St. Rita (the last mentioned donated by Mr. Serpas).

After the hurricane of 1898, the priest's house, still standing today, was erected. First Communion was held in the rectory on September 25, 1898.

One of the first tasks to which Father Colle turned his attention after his installation as pastor in 1893, was the reorganization of the Altar Society. The first session was held on November 9, 1893. The object of the organization was set forth to contribute to the ornamentation of the altar and the upkeep of everything connected with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, including furnishings, vestments, flowers and lamps. At this first meeting, the following officers were elected: Mme. Patrick Barry, president; Madame Vinet, secretary; Rev. F. Colle, director, and the following zelatrices: Miss Dragon, for the upper section, and Miss Leocadie Jourdan, lower section; Madame Felix Hingle, directress to decorate the altars and wash the linens.

One of the important acts of Father Colle's administration was the incorporation of the parish on August 7, 1894, in keeping with the plan devised by Archbishop Janssens to make every Catholic parish in the archdiocese a separate legal entity. The Pointe-a-la-Hache church parish was incorporated under the name: The Congregation of St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church, according to an act drafted by the notary, W. Morgan Gurley. Father Colle was the secretary-treasurer, and Patrick E. Barry and Felix Hingle, the lay trustees, were members of the board. The parish



The second St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache, shown above, was built by Father Colle after the 1898 storm. It was destroyed by fire in the year 1924.

was set up as a corporation without capital stock for a period of 500 years.

Father Colle recorded 78 Baptisms in 1894, his first full year, and in 1911, he registered 48. On March 4, 1894, he had First Communion with 51 in the class, and two days later, Archbishop Janssens gave Confirmation in St. Thomas Church to 154 persons. In 1911, there were only 39 First Communions.

Visited West Side Missions

Father Colle was not a very strong man, and he was unable to get around the parish as he wanted to. When he was able, he crossed over to City Price and he administered the Sacraments there. When he was called, many Sacraments had to be administered, sometimes from Baptism to Extreme Unction. He visited Jesuits' Bend also from 1893 to 1899, when Father McKenna took charge.

On October 7, 1899, the Young Friends' Benevolent Association, a charitable and benevolent society, was formed and registered before A. P. Alberti, Clerk of Court and ex-officio Recorder of Plaquemines Parish. The following officers were elected: Edward Lacroix, president; August Frederick, vice-president; Jules Frederick, secretary; J. Aristide Duplessis, corresponding secretary, and Joseph Preval, treasurer.

During the following year (1900), Archbishop Chapelle revived St. Cecilia's Parish of Jesuits' Bend, and appointed Rev. J. G. McKenna to take charge of it. He looked after the missions of the west side of the river, but he took charge also of Bertrandville on the east bank, thus reducing the territory that Father Colle had to cover. In 1908, he was succeeded by Rev. Joseph M. Kellogg at Jesuits' Bend. and he continued to serve Barataria and the west side settlements, including also Bertrandville on the east bank.

On the 26th of March, 1912, Archbishop Blenk came to Pointe-a-la-Hache for Confirmation and a canonical visitation. It was on this occasion that he issued the rebuke referred to at the beginning of this chapter, in regard to conditions that he found.

Father Colle Transferred to Charenton

At the beginning of December, 1912, Archbishop Blenk notified Father Colle that he was being transferred to Charenton, La., as pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. His name appears for the last time in the St. Thomas records on December 13. Thus ended a pastorate of almost 20 years.

Pending the appointment of a new pastor, Archbishop Blenk designated Father Kellogg of Jesuits' Bend to serve Pointe-a-la-Hache. His entries show Baptisms of persons from City Price, Bertrandville and Manila Village. It was Father Kellogg who planted the two rows of palm trees, a few of which still stand in front of the church. His double task of serving the two parishes lasted only four months, and we find his last entry on May 23, 1913. Shortly afterwards, the new pastor arrived.

Rev. Jean M. Eyraud

CHAPTER IX

ARCHBISHOP BLENK chose as the next pastor of St. Thomas Parish, a young French priest who had been serving as assistant at St. Louis Cathedral: Rev. Jean Martin Eyraud, at present the beloved pastor of St. Peter's Parish of Reserve, La., Dean of the Reserve Deanery, and honored by the Holy Father with the rank of Domestic Prelate and the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. He came to Pointe-a-la-Hache in June, 1913.

Father Eyraud was an energetic priest, who had great love and reverence for the house of God, and demanded respect for it and for religion, as respect for God's house left much to be desired. He constantly stressed the necessity and importance of having full knowledge of the Faith, and this he sought to give his flock by constant sermons and catechetical instructions in all sections of his vast parish. And vast it was, for upon assuming the pastorate, he found it practically the same in area as at the time of Father Langlois, for the whole Jesuits' Bend territory had once more been attached to St. Thomas Parish, thus giving him the care of all Catholics from City Price to Belle Chasse, and on the east bank, the whole area from Bohemia to Bertrandville.

Taught Catechism Under Oak Tree

He was wont to cross the river at Pointe-a-la-Hache and teach catechism at City Price, West Pointe-a-la-Hache and at various points along the river all the way up to Jesuits' Bend, preparing groups for First Communion and performing other functions of the Church. At West Pointe-a-la-Hache, he taught catechism under the big oak trees where the Castellano store is now located. On the east bank, he visited Phoenix and Bertrandville, providing religious ceremonies at the latter mission.

During 1914, Father Eyraud had 72 Baptisms, nine marriages and 22 burials. In the First Communion class of May 31, 1914, there were 42 children—35 at St. Thomas, and seven at one of the missions. The results of his catechetical work were evident in the figures of the class of May 27, 1915, when there were 88 first communicants from St. Thomas, City Price and Phoenix. Among places listed that persons came from who were baptized are found Pointe Celeste, Junior, City Price, Diamond, Sainte Sophie, Nero, Davant and Magnolia.

Confirmation Given By Bishop Laval

Bishop Laval came for Confirmation on December 6, 1914, at St. Thomas Church, and on that occasion 101 persons were confirmed. Rev. L. Borredon of St. Bernard and Rev. B. Lefebvre of the Cathedral assisted the Bishop and Father Eyraud.

The two trustees of St. Thomas Parish appointed that year were Simon Ragas and Bernard Favret. They served until Father Girault's administration.

Father Eyraud sought to draw the men closer to the Church and the Sacraments, and for this purpose, in 1914, he organized the first Holy Name



Rev. J. M. Eyraud, now Right Reverend Monsignor, was pastor of St. Thomas Church from 1913 to 1916.



The late Monsignor Gassler, then Vicar Gassler, directed installation of Father Girault as pastor.

Society in the Parish. One of the first officers was Mr. Favret. The maintenance of the Society was also given renewed impetus.

One of the improvements made by Father Eyraud was the remodeling of the rectory, which was one of the points complained about by Archbishop Blenk in his visitation notes. The kitchen had been a separate building from the priest's house. Father Eyraud, in remodelling, added a bathroom and joined the three together into a sturdy building. It was not long before this proved to be a blessing.

When the great hurricane of September, 1915, blew in from the Gulf of Mexico, Plaquemines Parish suffered great damage. Water rose a few feet in the church, five feet in the rectory, but the substantial rectory served as a wind-break for the church, which escaped serious harm. Fortunately, too, the parish records were kept in a high, dry place. When the wind had abated and the waters receded, Father Eyraud directed attention of the parishioners to the refuse one foot thick left in the rectory and the condition of the church. He appealed to them to give thought to God's house and to the rectory. The following day, parishioners responded enthusiastically, many coming with shovels, wheelbarrows, brooms and mules. Working hard and long, and the task of cleaning up was accomplished completely and well, thus saving the parish the expense, as Father Eyraud stated, of a couple of thousand dollars.

In May, 1916, word reached Pointe-a-la-Hache that Archbishop Blenk was transferring Father Eyraud to St. Peter's Church at Reserve, La. Parishioners remember that many had tears in their eyes when Father Eyraud notified them of his departure, for he had become greatly beloved, and they realized they were losing a devoted priest. On May 31, 1916, the

late Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis L. Gassler, Vicar-General, arrived and made the canonical transfer of the parish to the new pastor, and to make the inventory. A sidelight on Father Eyraud's character is given in the entry by Monsignor Gassler, stating that the furnishings of the rectory, the personal property of the retiring priest, were being transferred to the parish. The transfer also states that the parish was free from debt, evidence of the efficient management of Father Eyraud and the co-operation of the parishioners. Listed among the church statues in the inventory are shown statues of the Sacred Heart, St. Thomas, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. Philomene, St. Anthony, St. Aloysius, St. Barbe and St. Nicholas.

Monsignor Gassler Defines Boundaries

Monsignor Gassler also defined the territorial limits, as of that year, 1916: On the east bank of the Mississippi River, from Daisy in the South, to Belair in the north; on the west bank, from Socola Canal in the south, to Junior in the north; the eastern and western limits are given as the sea marshes. Moreover, the former parish of Jesuits' Bend, with all its territory on either side of the river, is declared to belong temporarily to the Parish of Pointe-a-la-Hache. For the last time at the end of May, Father Eyraud signed the records of St. Thomas and for the first time the new pastor signed.



Rev. Joseph M. Kellogg, pastor of St. Cecilia's at Jesuits' Bend with a group of First Communicants.



Old oaks and ancient tombs in St. Thomas Parish cemetery, on an Indian mound near the church.

Father Girault

CHAPTER X



Rev. John Girault de la Corgnais, beloved pastor of St. Thomas Church, served the people of Plaquemines with zeal and devotion for more than 11 years.

ON THE last day of May, 1916, began the pastorate of one of the most outstanding priests to serve St. Thomas Church, a colorful and individualistic character, a devoted and energetic priest, and amazing worker and romantic figure who has become a legend in South Louisiana and whose labors, exploits and services to his people bid fair to become typical folklore. His name has become a by-word in Plaquemines Parish and his memory is solidly entrenched among the clergy of Louisiana. This beloved figure was Rev. John Girault de la Corgnais, the sixth permanent pastor since the days of Father Savelli.

Father Girault was a native of Brittany, France, born in 1869, and after entering the seminary he decided to devote his ministry and his energies to the Louisiana missions, and was accepted by Archbishop Janssens. One of his seminary classmates was Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. F. Prim, P.A. He finished his studies at Louvain University, where he was ordained.

His first assignment was at St. Louis Cathedral as assistant, and his next post was also assistant at St. Rose de Lima Church, New Orleans. During the Spanish-American War, he served as American Army Chaplain. He was sent to Patoutville, La., as pastor of St. Nicholas Church, where he labored devotedly for 17 years. Upon the transfer of Father Eyraud to Reserve, Archbishop Blenk offered to Father Girault the difficult and immense parish of Pointe-a-la-Hache. This meant no honors and dignities, no large income—only a wealth of work and constant effort to eke out an existence. Father Girault accepted the new post, and for the next 11 years and seven months he devoted himself whole-heartedly and without stint to Plaquemines Parish, until his health failed and death took him.

Father Girault had charge of the whole Plaquemines Parish territory, excepting the Buras church parish, which extended up to and included Happy Jack. No pastor ever gave so much attention to the Catholics of these vast stretches as Father Girault did. He visited every corner and ministered to all, giving zealous care to the Negroes of his parish. He noted communities where chapels were needed and promptly he undertook to provide them. To all these places he made regular visits, teaching catechism, giving instructions and sermons . . . emphatic, colorful and sometimes explosive talks that drove home without mincing words, the principles of religion and morals . . . and providing the ceremonies of the Church. He organized First Communion classes and arranged for regular visits of the Archbishop for Confirmation. He insisted upon Catholic marriages, thundered violently against justice-of-the-peace marriages, violently condemned lack of respect for the laws of God and His Church, ceaselessly demanded reverence in Church, and never relented in his insistence upon fidelity to Sunday Mass and the Easter Precept. Yet with all his vigorous condemnations of evil and his energetic urgings for Catholic living, he was as tender as a mother to those in affliction and to the poor, and a true father to his people, who sought his guidance and his help. He was, in truth, all things to all men.



When City Price had no church, Father Girault offered Mass outdoors, improvising an altar under a tree, with whatever material was handy as shown above.



The St. Thomas—Father Girault's famous boat with which he visited all parts of the parish. In the prow is the archiepiscopal cross that he installed.

His ministrations were physical as well as spiritual. It is said that Father Girault had studied medicine, and this knowledge he used on countless occasions among his people, saving a number of lives, when no doctor was available for miles around. Many a long journey he made in his boat in the dark of night to distant settlements or farms to attend to some sick person, when no doctor would come. It is no wonder that all the political factions of the parish nominated him for coroner. Governor Fuqua wrote him a beautiful letter, the last he wrote. Governor Simpson, immediately upon taking office signed a commission, and Father Girault became, so far as known, the first Catholic priest coroner in Louisiana. Under four successive administrations, he served as a Colonel on the Governor's staff. He served also as justice of the peace and as probation officer. The National Office of the Red Cross decorated him with a gold cross for his heroic devotion during epidemics of yellow fever and small-pox. The Plaquemines Chapter presented him with a bronze medal. In January, 1927, the French Consul at New Orleans pinned on his cassock, while he was in Hotel Dieu, the decoration of the French Academy with two silver palms, on behalf of the government of France. Such was the esteem in which Father Girault came to be held, and such some of the honors bestowed upon him, but withal, he continued just the same, genial, jovial, humble and hard-working pastor of Pointe-a-la-Hache, who knew neither high nor low, nor discriminated between the influential and the humble.

Father Girault never lost his great love and admiration for his native France. This was manifested in a quaint custom which he followed. Whenever French vessels went up or down the Mississippi River, he hoisted the Tricolor and proceeded to fire a salvo from one of two ancient

cannons which he prized greatly. War vessels usually stopped in front of the church, and Father Girault went on board, where he was always given a warm welcome by the officers. St. Thomas Church soon became a landmark for the French ships and they blew their whistles a mile or more before passing the church. If Father Girault was at Mass, he had the bells rung, then proceeded with the altar boys bearing the processional cross, to the front door, from which he blessed the ship with the cross. Afterwards, he returned to the altar and proceeded with the ceremonies.

Story of Father Girault's Cannons

One of Father Girault's famous cannons originally came from New York and belonged to James Wilkinson, who used it for his political campaigns. A Colored man, Radey Bill, accompanied him, and he always wore a very attractive suit. Radey "toted" the cannon on Wilkinson's tours and fired it to attract people, also to draw voters to the polls. Eventually, it was acquired by Father Girault, whose salvos became famous in South Louisiana. The other cannon came from Pensacola and was a former Confederate gun.

To enable him to reach all corners of his watery parish, more readily and more frequently, Father Girault acquired a motor-boat or launch, which he christened "The St. Thomas". This became one of his dearest possessions, for it meant ability to reach his people, and more . . . enable many of them to reach the ministrations of the Church and her Sacraments. On its prow, he installed an archiepiscopal cross, which he fashioned from pieces of pipe. In the "St. Thomas", Father Girault hastened to the dying for the last Sacraments, brought the coffin and the family to church for funerals, ferried marriage parties to church for ceremonies, and made his calls for instructions to distant settlements. Humorously, he called it "my wagon".

Used Colorful and Forceful Methods

Where he found groups of Catholic residents, he promptly organized them and arranged to offer Holy Mass. Often this was on an improvised altar under a tree, or in a cemetery, with a canvas or awning for overhead protection, and boxes or crates for an altar. His ingenuity and his energy in such matters were remarkable. He never failed to use such times to deliver a forceful and direct sermon that was punctuated with homely and colorful similes, and Biblical quotations on the wrath of God and His punishment of the sinner.

Father Girault gave particular attention to the scattered Catholics in communities other than Pointe-a-la-Hache, on both sides of the river. City Price or Diamond, as it is also called, drew his special interest from the start, and in 1916, he began to teach catechism, give instructions and offer Mass there. At times he used private homes for this. In pioneer days, Ave Barthelemy's house was used for Mass. Later on, Father Girault used a tent that was big enough to form a sanctuary, thus providing protection for the priest and the altar, but if rain came, the congregation scampered off to the nearest shelters. He pleaded with the people to attend Mass and to lead Catholic lives, and it is said that he often walked in the hot sun in expiation for them.

The zealous Barthelemy family co-operated closely with him, Ave

Barthelemy having previously taught at a school near Socola Canal for 30 years or more. At once they fell in with Father Girault's zealous efforts, and on October 20, 1919, Jean Baptiste Barthelemy and Jean Barthelemy, widow of Pascal Barthelemy, donated to St. Thomas Parish corporation a piece of ground for a church and a school in City Price. Generous Mather Katherine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, made a gift of \$1500 for another project of Father Girault's, Domingue School, but since he felt that the need at City Price was more immediate, he proceeded to erect a building at the latter place, which was a combination church and school. The mission was placed under the invocation of St. Paulinus. Amid the rejoicing of the people there, the school opened in October, 1920, having Miss Mora Alexis and Miss Audrey Dusau as first teachers, Mother Drexel and the Plaquemines Parish School Board gave help. From 1940 on, the School Board alone financed the school. Former Governor Warmoth furnished lumber and other material, while the rest was obtained from flotsam and jetsam of the river.

About the same time, Father Girault was striving to make provisions for the Catholics of the Domingue area. The problem was partly solved by a generous donation of a lot of ground, 52½ by 150 feet, by Miss Sophie Domingue and Miss Josephine Domingue, on July 7, 1920. He then issued an appeal "to progressive citizens to help us to erect a school." However, the bulk of the money, \$1000, came from Mother Katherine Drexel, and with this he erected a school for the education of the Colored children, which opened at the end of 1920, or very early in 1921.

Father Girault began a mission also at West Pointe-a-la-Hache, which became known as St. Jude, but it actually began organized work under Father Cosmas Schneider, S.V.D. Pointe Celeste was another center that Father Girault established, also on the west bank, and he began mission work likewise at Belle Chasse. He had great hopes for Myrtle Grove and



Group in front of Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville, with Father Girault and Rev. A. Gaudino, when he conducted a mission for the parishioners there.

undertook construction of a chapel there which never materialized, as we shall note. By the end of his pastorate, Father Girault had established some six missions and chapels in his vast territory to serve his people, besides those already established and were being served, such as Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville and St. Cecilia's at Jesuits' Bend. Thus he strove energetically to provide spiritual ministrations and instructions to his large flock scattered over a wide area on both sides of the river.

In 1916-1917 statistics show 29 First Communions at St. Thomas Church and 25 at Bertrandville. For 1920-1921, there were 21 at St. Thomas, 26 at Bertrandville and 30 at City Price. Just how much Father Girault had extended his work is evident in 1926 from his report showing 84 First Communions at Pointe Celeste on the west bank, and 45 at West Pointe-a-la-Hache.

Reports Show Work Done By Pastor

Bishop Laval gave Confirmation to 51 persons at Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville on June 29, 1921, and on July 17 of the same year, Archbishop Shaw came down to St. Thomas Church and Confirmed 116 children and adults.

In his recapitulation for 1920, Father Girault shows a total of 66 Baptisms for St. Thomas, Bertrandville, City Price, Jesuits' Bend and West Pointe-a-la-Hache. During 1923, there were 69 Baptisms, and the following year (1924), there were 66. The number of Catholic marriages, as heretofore, continued relatively small: In 1920, for St. Thomas and its missions, 13; in 1923, 14 and 1924, 16.

The report of January 1, 1924, gives an excellent idea of Father Girault's work and the statistics he furnishes provide interesting facts. He gives the Catholic population at approximately 1000, and the number of Communions during the previous year (1923), as totalling 1864. At that time, he served Assumption Chapel, Bertrandville, every other Sunday, but held catechism classes during the week, and conducted May devotions. Every other Sunday he served St. Paulinus Chapel at City Price (Diamond), and occasionally during the week taught catechism and visited the school. At that town he visited the stores and demanded that people come to Mass. St. Cecilia's Church at Jesuits' Bend was visited once a month, and instructions given at early Mass during the Easter time. Mass and instructions were given occasionally at Belle Chasse and Myrtle Grove.

Gave Attention to West Bank Missions

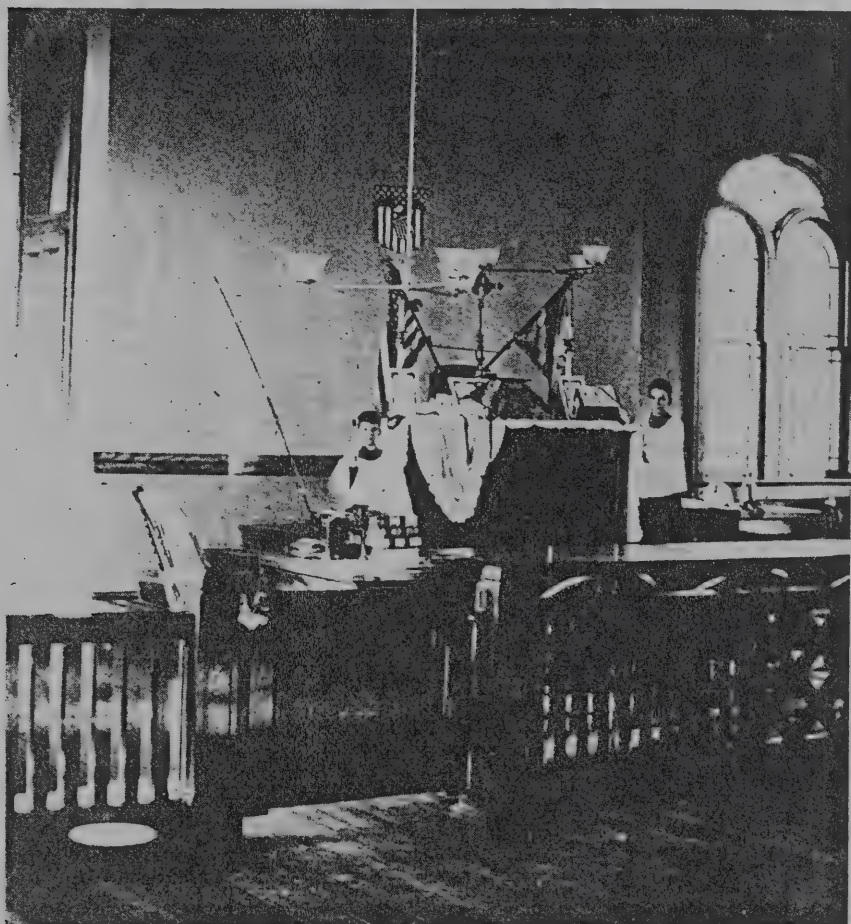
In his 1925 report, Father Girault corrected the Catholic population as 1800. West Pointe-a-la-Hache was added to his Catechism centers in 1924, and he began to offer Mass at Myrtle Grove, which he listed as a suitable place for the residence of a priest to care for the west bank. By January, 1926, the foundations were already laid for a chapel at Myrtle Grove, using the old sugar house, and material was on hand for construction work, but Father Girault's health was failing and he could not go ahead with work there as he desired. In fact, the chapel was never built. At that time, he was saying Mass in a cabin at Pointe Celeste, and every month he offered Mass outdoors or in Charlie Bieber's home at Belle Chasse. City Price, he wrote, "requires apostolic work and attention." After Msgr. Eyraud, he also gave special attention to West Pointe-a-la-Hache.

The Diocesan Synod of 1922, conducted by Archbishop Shaw, defined

the limits of the parish as follows: On the east bank of the Mississippi River from Daisy in the south to Belair in the north; on the west bank, from Sccola Canal in the south, to Junior in the north; the eastern and western limits are the sea marshes. The former parish of Jesuits' Bend with all its territory on either side of the river, belongs temporarily to the parish of Pointe-a-la-Hache.

That same year, the Archbishop approved the appointment of John B. Hingle and Frank Lobrano as trustees of St. Thomas Parish, succeeding Simeon Ragas and Bernard Favret, who had moved to New Orleans.

The question of the parish boundaries came up for discussion again, and in 1925, at the request of Archbishop Shaw, Rev. Joseph Levesque, who had served for many years as pastor of Buras, stated his views: "The Sccola Canal has always been the division line between the missions under



When St. Thomas Church burned in 1924, Mass was offered in Plaquemines Parish Courthouse, the view above showing the improvised altar that was used.

the charge of the priest located at Buras and the priest located at Pointe-a-la-Hache. From Nestor Post Office, east side of the Mississippi River, to the Gulf has also been under the care of the Buras priest . . . Above Nestor P. O. belongs to Pointe-a-la-Hache."

While Father Girault was in New Orleans on a visit, in 1924, St. Thomas Church caught fire. When the alarm was given, people would not believe that their parish church was afire, but when they realized it was true, it was too late. The edifice burned to the ground and with it everything, including a collection of valuable vestments. Also destroyed was the church bell, which had been donated by Bernard Savoie. That very day, Father Girault had received some money to pay for insurance, but not soon enough—there was not a cent of insurance on the building. Undaunted and refusing to waste time repining, he set to work at once to rebuild. A collection in the parish netted a little over \$300. Still refusing to be discouraged, he sent an urgent plea to his confreres of the clergy and to various religious houses, likewise to business men and friends all over the state, in which he stated he would gladly accept anything from them, "from a nail to a hundred dollars". While waiting for a response, he went out with his boat, the St. Thomas, scouring the river banks, catching floating planks and timbers, which he hauled to the church site.

Responses Bring Many Contributions

When sufficient timber was obtained, he planned a new church, and proceeded to build the sanctuary first. In it he held services, while the people stood in the open. When the weather became inclement, worshippers had to make a hasty dash for nearby shelter. Meanwhile, responses began coming in from all sides, and in most unexpected form. Friends in New Orleans contributed some money. The high altar came from St. Mary's church (*l'Eveche*, or Bishop's church on Chartres street); this was a historic altar, for on it all the pioneer French priests upon arriving in the city, had offered Mass, and Father Girault had offered Mass there too for the first time when he had arrived from France. Our Lady of the Good Harbor Church at Buras sent the Stations of the Cross. The benches, still used, came from the Cathedral. A telephone booth from the St. Charles Hotel at New Orleans, was converted into a confessional, and is still in use. The statues of St. Peter and St. Paul were given by the Redemptorist Fathers. Father Cartiser of Garyville gave the monstrance. The large bell, inscribed with the name "John William", in honor of Archbishop Shaw, came from Magnolia Plantation. A statue of St. John was donated by Miss Josephine Savoie. The statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was obtained through the efforts of Miss Clotilde Domingue and Miss Josephine Domingue. The E. W. Gravolet family donated the statue of St. Thomas and the pedestal, and the O. Livaudais family again gave the Baptismal font. The F. S. Hingle family gave the large pictures of the Saints, and F. Achée gave the statue of the Sacred Heart. Both white and Colored people of the parish came forward to help in whatever they would, to rebuild their parish church.

And thus with a wealth of gifts and generous contributions from within and from without the parish, a new St. Thomas church arose, a

frame building with stucco exterior, and topped by a steeple. Some of the work was done by Father Girault himself. It was not long before the congregation of Pointe-a-la-Hache was once more having all the ceremonies of the church within the completed new edifice, decorated with statues and stained glass windows.

Performed Works of Mercy

Meanwhile, he continued his multitude of other labors. Characteristic of Father Girault is the incident of burying with his own hands, the bodies of a number of Orientals who had been victims of an explosion aboard a steamer in the river, near Pointe-a-la-Hache. When the bodies of the victims floated ashore after several days in the water and exposed, no one was found to perform the burial, and it is said that Father Girault performed this act of Christian charity.

At a Christmas tree party given by the Colored children of one of the schools, Father Girault was presented with a large package, and when they insisted upon his opening it, he found it contained a heap of muskrat skins which the tots had collected. These he brought in his dilapidated Ford to Archbishop Shaw in payment of the "cathedraticum", but the venerable prelate declined payment in kind—that kind—and returned the pelts to Father Girault.

Death Removes Beloved Pastor

In 1926, he became ill, and in January of the following year, he was removed to Hotel Dieu. However, he recovered and returned to his duties, but in the fall of 1927, his health failed and once more he was taken to Hotel Dieu. On December 12, 1927, Father Girault, only 59 years of age, spent by many arduous labors in the priesthood, and more than 11 years of ceaseless labors in all corners of Plaquemines Parish, passed away peacefully. Funeral ceremonies were conducted on December 14 at Mater Dolorosa Church, whose pastor, Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. F. Prim, P.A., former classmate and lifelong friend, chanted the Solemn Requiem Mass. Archbishop Shaw gave the final absolution in the presence of 67 priests, dignitaries of the state and Plaquemines Parish and a delegation from St. Thomas Parish. Burial was in the diocesan clergy's tomb in St. Louis No. 3 Cemetery. In tribute to his service during the Spanish-American War, taps were sounded at the grave.

Divine Word Fathers

CHAPTER XI

IN 1924, Archbishop Shaw had established a new parish in New Orleans, which he asked the Franciscan Fathers to direct. He had realized that a religious order could better take care of the difficult territory and missions of the Buras parish, since an order could more easily provide additional priests. So the Buras parish was also given to the Franciscan Fathers, who took charge of the area from Happy Jack to the river's mouth on the west side, and from Nestor to the Passes on the east side.

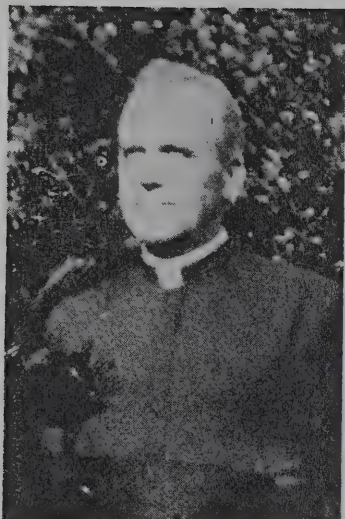
When Father Girault died, the Archbishop, surveying the vast territory that was embraced in St. Thomas Parish, taking in as it did then, both sides of the river from Scarsdale to Nestor, and from Belle Chasse to Diamond, felt that a religious congregation could provide necessary priests to care for the parish church and its several missions. Accordingly, Archbishop Shaw requested the Society of the Divine Word, whose provincial house was then located at Techny, Ill., to assume direction of the parish. This congregation, founded in 1875, at Steyl, Holland, by Father Arnold Janssen, has become world-famous for its missionary labors, sending its intrepid and heroic missionaries, priests and Brothers, in the most difficult and remote mission fields of the world. Its services to the Church and its achievements in the spread of the Gospel have been phenomenal. One of their noted institutions in this country, besides their famous Mission House at Techny, is St. Augustine's Seminary at Bay St. Louis, Miss., for the education of Negro priests, the first institution of its kind in this country.

Society Accepts Care of Parish

The Provincial of the Society accepted the offer of Archbishop Shaw, and Fathers thus began their foundation in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Their signal success and their endless evangelical labors during the past 17 years have more than justified the hopes and expectations of the venerable prelate who invited them to the archdiocese.

Just a short time after Father Girault's death, the Provincial sent Rev. Herman Hagen, S.V.D., to take charge of St. Thomas parish. Native of Breidenbach, Archdiocese of Cologne, born in 1883, Father Hagen made his preparatory priestly studies at St. Michael's Mission House, the mother-house of the Society, at Steyl, Holland. He studied his philosophy and theology at St. Gabriel's Mission House, near Vienna, then came to this country after ordination on May 1, 1921. From then on, he engaged in mission work in the South and West. He is now a resident at St. Augustine's Seminary, Bay St. Louis.

Father Hagen plunged into his work immediately. His first Baptism is recorded on Christmas Day, 1927. He had a great love for the beauty of the house of God, and he delighted in having the altars decorated for services, but his main interest was in the missions and in giving instructions. For a short time he had the assistance of Father Haas, also a Divine



Rev. Herman Hagen, S.V.D.,
first Divine Word priest pastor
of St. Thomas.



Rev. Cosmas Schneider, S.V.D.,
took charge of missions on west
bank.

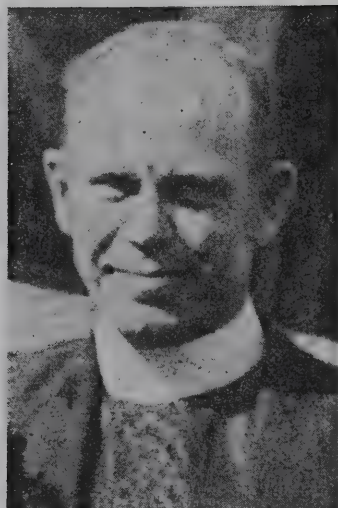
Word Father, and together they conducted First Communion at City Price for a class of 45 children. However, Father Hagen remained only a short time, and his last entry in the parish books is dated June 12, 1928.

The Provincial then sent to Plaquemines one of the most zealous priests that ever labored in that vast section—Rev. Comas Schneider, S.V.D., who devoted 10 years of remarkable labors in the interest of Faith. For a brief period, he assumed charge of St. Thomas Church, pending the arrival of Rev. John Hoenderop, S.V.D., the new pastor. Father Schneider devoted himself exclusively to the missions on the west bank, eventually becoming pastor of the new parish of Belle Chasse, as we shall note.

Father Hoenderop, native of Holland, born in 1870, was ordained a priest of the Society of the Divine Word in 1899. He was one of the pioneers of the Society's missions in the South. Although not a professional architect, a number of fine schools and churches in charge of the Society were erected, according to his plans and under his supervision. After fruitful pastoral work at Vicksburg, Miss., he assumed charge of St. Thomas Parish at Pointe-a-la-Hache in the summer of 1928. In a short time, he had won the esteem and reverence of parishioners, as he had the faculty of ready mingling with people, and he was often seen with the older men of the parish, discussing their business and their interests. In this way, he accomplished much spiritually, encouraging the lukewarm and bringing many to a more truly Catholic life.

Father Hoenderop devoted much time and effort to the missions. Beginning on August 28, 1928, he attended Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville every Friday and Sunday. He organized the Altar Society there, and did much to revive a more zealous Catholic life.

Father Schneider devoted himself to the long series of settlements on



Rev. Peter Boerding, S.V.D., St. Thomas pastor, 1931, now Belle Chasse pastor.



Rev. John Hoenderop, S.V.D., served twice as pastor at Pointe-a-la-Hache.

the west bank of Belle Chasse down to City Price. Later Father Hoenderop relieved him of those missions across from Pointe-a-la-Hache. He felt that a chapel should be established at Phoenix to care for the people there. Among improvements he made was the installation of a new confessional in the church, and the renovation of the rectory, under the sponsorship of Archbishop Shaw.

When Father Hoenderop arranged for Confirmation on May 28, 1929, at St. Thomas Church, Bishop Laval gave that Sacrament to a class of 152 persons, white and Colored. On the same day, the Bishop gave Confirmation to 65 at Bertrandville. His reports for that year sets the Catholic population of the church parish at 800, Communion at 1660, and marriages at 10.

In 1931, Father Hoenderop was transferred to St. Rose de Lima Parish, Bay St. Louis, Miss., but three years later, he returned to Pointe-a-la-Hache. His successor at St. Thomas was Rev. John Klaffl, S.V.D., but he served the parish only until July of that year. Native of Bavaria, ordained in 1898, he had a remarkable missionary record, having served in New Guinea and Togo, Africa, and at Little Rock, Bay St. Louis, Vicksburg and the Japanese Mission at San Francisco, before coming to Pointe-a-la-Hache. He returned to San Francisco, where he died of a stroke on August 20, 1943.

The next pastor was Rev. Peter Boerding, S.V.D., young priest, who came in 1931. He was born in St. Charles, Mo., made his studies at St. Mary's Mission House, Techny, Ill., and was ordained there April 19, 1930. After a year as assistant at Chicago, he was entrusted with the care of St. Thomas Parish, serving there until 1935. After three years of service

at St. Elizabeth's Church, Chicago, he was sent in 1938, to assume the pastorate at Belle Chasse, where he is at present.

Father Boerding improved the interior of St. Thomas church, installing beaverboard, and repaired the church tower. He made a number of other minor improvements. For the year 1933, Father Boerding reported 1700 Communion, 38 Baptisms and 63 Confirmations. The Maintenance Society was given renewed impetus during his administration. He devoted his complete attention to the missions along the east bank, as Father Schneider had charge of the missions on the opposite side.

When Father Boerding was transferred in 1935, Father Hoenderop was sent back to Pointe-a-la-Hache, and parishioners enthusiastically welcomed him on his return. It was not difficult for him to enter upon his duties, as he was thoroughly familiar with the work and the people. That same year (1935), carrying out the directions of Archbishop Rummel, he organized a Parish Council of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. The Maintenance Society was also given a further impetus, under its officers, Anson Gravolet and Ernest Dobson.

Father Hoenderop's health was failing, and besides, the superiors felt an assistant was needed, particularly since it was planned to relieve Father Schneider of some of the missions across the river from Pointe-a-la-Hache, which entailed for him the long trip from Belle Chasse, and place them in charge of one of the priests at St. Thomas.

In 1936, Rev. Theodore Koeller, S.V.D., was assigned as assistant to Father Hoenderop at St. Thomas. Born in Holland in 1895, he studied at the motherhouse at Steyl, Holland, then finished his theology at St. Gabriel's Mission House, near Vienna. After ordination in 1925, he came to this country and for 11 years taught at the Seminary at Bay St. Louis, and St. Paul's Mission House, Epworth, Iowa. From there, he came South.



Rev. John Klaffl, S.V.D., served St. Thomas Parish briefly in 1931.



Rev. Theodore Koeller, S.V.D., parish assistant, became pastor in 1938.



St. Thomas Church, the third building, as it appears at present.

The superiors, believing that the west bank missions would be easier, directed Father Hoenderop to serve them, and allow the assistant, Father Koeller, to work the east bank. The reverse was true, but Father Hoenderop undertook the difficult task of serving City Price and West Pointe-a-la-Hache, which he continued from July, 1936, to January, 1938. He was the first priest to give these two missions Mass every Sunday, a fact which some resented as "too much religion", because Father Schneider, being so far away and having so many stations to serve, could come only once each month. Regardless of discouragement and indifference, especially among the men, he continued his work, facing the inconvenience and sometimes even the danger, of the constant crossings of the river in every imaginable weather, to reach his missions on the west bank. He gave that section a tremendous impetus to Catholic life, and he neglected nothing to arouse a more intense zeal and deeper Faith.

Meanwhile, St. Thomas Church, Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville and other missions of the east side were being served by Father Koeller, the assistant, who journeyed up and down the river road, day in and day out.

Father Hoenderop's health had been failing steadily, but he worked zealously despite poor health. On April 5, 1938, he passed away, the fourth pastor of St. Thomas to die in office.

Father Koeller, who had been assistant pastor at St. Thomas since 1936, was designated as pastor. It was the first time in the annals of the parish that the assistant succeeded the pastor without leaving the parish, and he was the second assistant to assume the pastorate, the first having been Father Bertholin. Father Koeller continued his accustomed duties,

but adding the task of caring for the missions across the river, until July of that year (1938), when the superiors sent an assistant to share the work.

This new priest was Rev. Jerome Haines, S.V.D., still serving as assistant pastor. He was born in 1905 at Arcadia, Wis., and entered St. Mary's Mission House at Techny to make his priestly studies. After ordination at Techny on May 12, 1935, he taught for three years at St. Augustine's Seminary, Bay St. Louis, and at St. Paul's Mission House, Epworth, Iowa. From his post of seminary professor, he was transferred to Pointe-a-la-Hache, and during the past six years, he has given devoted service to the parish, particularly to the west bank missions, which he served until August, 1942.

Pastor Renovated Two Churches

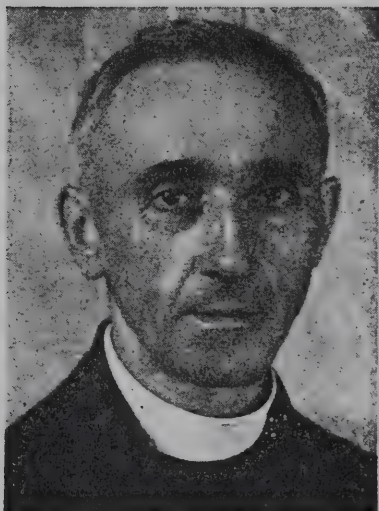
Father Koeller accomplished much during his three years as pastor. He renovated St. Thomas Church, likewise Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville, and had both painted and decorated. The statues were also repainted. In truth he made the house of God beautiful and a bit more worthy of the Divine Presence. Just before the hurricane of 1940, he had the large tower of St. Thomas Church cut down, as the weight was too great for the supports. Had this not been done, it may have fallen during the howling winds and serious damage would have been done to the building.

This energetic pastor also devoted much attention to the parochial organizations. At St. Thomas, he organized the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at Bertrandville, in May, 1939, he organized the sodality also. In 1938, he formed at the latter chapel. St. John's Club for young men. Statistics for 1939 prepared by Father Koeller show that there were 127 boys in religious instruction class, and 295 girls, and in the Sodality 35, and the Catholic Youth Organization, 18 boys. The Altar Society had 32 members. Baptisms totalled 44, 43 received Confirmation, and 20 Catholic burial were performed. There were 16 marriages.

Father Haines Served West Side Missions

Meanwhile, Father Haines was continuing his difficult work across the river, making the weekly and even more frequent trips across the river in the ferry in all sorts of weather, storms and fog and sometimes, lacking ferry facilities, in a skiff, to provide spiritual ministrations to the people of St. Paulinus Mission at City Price, and St. Jude of West Pointe-a-la-Hache. Both stations were extremely poor. At West Pointe-a-la-Hache, the Fathers used an old dilapidated house, which served as both chapel and school. Father Koeller, casting about on all sides for help to repair the mission, met only failure. He then issued an appeal through the magazine, "Our Colored Missions", in June, 1941, and the result was a check of \$500 from Father Kramer, which made possible necessary repairs.

In the summer of 1941, Father Koeller was sent to Sacred Heart Church at Greenville, Miss., and in August of that year, Rev. Peter Oswald, S.V.D., the present pastor, was appointed to assume charge of St. Thomas Parish at Pointe-a-la-Hache. Born in Bavaria, he pursued his school and college studies at the Benedictine Monastery in Metten, Bavaria, then



Rev. Peter Oswald, S.V.D., present pastor of St. Thomas Parish, was appointed in 1941, and has given the parish many improvements.



Rev. Jerome Haines, S.V.D., has served as assistant at St. Thomas since 1938, and until 1942, had charge of the missions on the west bank.

made his philosophy and theology at St. Gabriel's Mission House, in the vicinity of Vienna. On September 28, 1913, he was ordained a priest. The following summer he was scheduled to leave for New Guinea, but the outbreak of World War I made the voyage impossible, so remained in his native country engaged in parish work. Finally, in 1920, he came to the United States, being assigned to teach. It was not long before Father Oswald achieved great fame as an outstanding botanist, horticulturist and professor of natural sciences in various seminaries of the Divine Word Fathers. His heart's desire, however, was always mission work. It was finally fulfilled when after a short stay in Holy Ghost Parish, Jackson, Miss., he was sent, in 1941, to Pointe-a-la-Hache as pastor.

Father Oswald plunged into his work in' Plaquemines with energy and enthusiasm, devoting himself wholeheartedly to the proper instruction of children and bringing the ministrations of the Church to every section of the vast parish. He formed societies, established the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in September, 1942, and the Association of the Holy Childhood, beautified the church, added statues and promoted frequent Communion.

The Confraternity was established also at St. Mary's Assumption, Bertrandville; St. Sophie's Chapel, Phoenix; Blessed Martin de Porres' Mission, Davant, and St. Joseph's Chapel, Bohemia. The present officers of the Confraternity at St. Thomas Church are Wilson Dauterive, president; Bernard Dragon, vice-president; Mrs. Joe Capone, treasurer, and Mrs. Belle Ellington, secretary.

In 1942, Father Oswald, realizing the absolute need of additional mis-

sion chapels to serve the people on the east side, besides St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache and the Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville, leaving many miles of territory between those two churches without any house of worship, decided to remedy this situation. He established three new missions: St. Sophie's Chapel at Phoenix, from the name of the plantation formerly operated there; Blessed Martin de Porres at Davant, Domingue School, and St. Joseph's Chapel, Encalade School, at Bohemia, Lower Pointe-a-la-Hache. Catechism has also been taught for many years at Duplessis school, a mile from St. Thomas church.

Father Oswald arranged for Mass every other Sunday at Phoenix and Davant from March 2, 1942, and every Sunday since August 9, of that year. On the latter date, Bohemia also began to have Mass every Sunday. First Communion was held for the first time at St. Sophie's Chapel by Father Oswald on July 19, 1942, with 13 in the class, and the first Baptism had been held there on July 5. When St. Joseph's mission at Bohemia had First Communion on September 6, 1942, there were 23 children receiving.

St. Thomas Parish territory was once more restricted in 1942, when the two missions on the west bank, West Pointe-a-la-Hache and Diamond (City Price) were transferred from St. Thomas to the care of the Franciscan Fathers of Buras. For the previous four years, these missions as well as St. Joseph's mission at Junior, in a house used for divine services, had been zealously attended to by Father Haines, who has held the post of curate in the parish longer than any previous assistant—a period of nearly seven years. Father Haines after the transfer, dedicated his services to St. Thomas and the missions of the east side, under direction of Father Oswald.

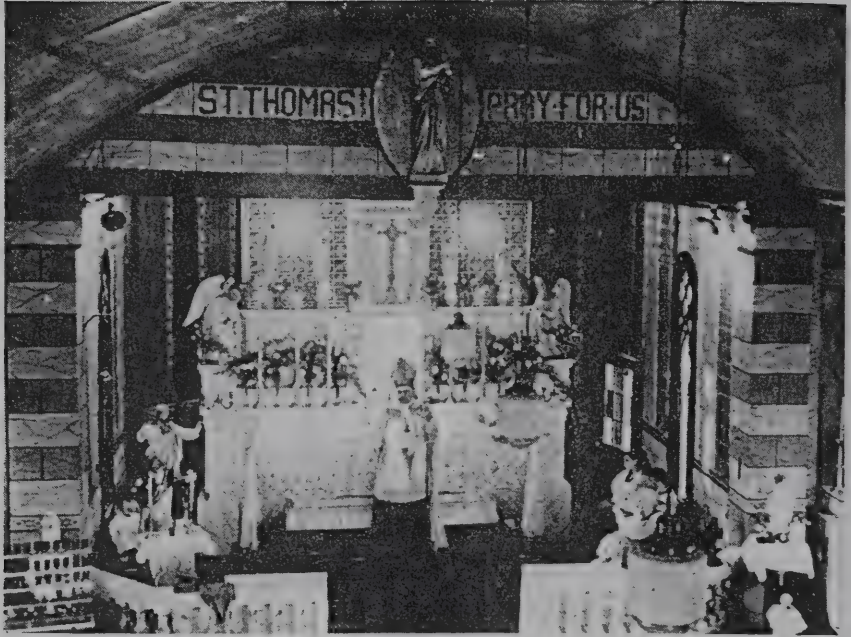
Father Oswald's 1943 report showed the Catholic population as 1400, and the Holy Communions that year totalling 5000. Bertrandville had seven First Communions that year, and the parish church and other missions had 33.

On February 27, 1944, Father Oswald unveiled a beautiful new statue of the Sorrowful Mother at St. Thomas Church, purchase of which was made possible by Miss Ida Mesman, in memory of her deceased sister, Miss Mary Mesman. Mrs. W. Beshel donated a statue of the Infant Jesus.

His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, came to Plaquemines on August 12, 1943, and Confirmed 36 at St. Thomas Church, and 26 at Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville that day. Statistics for that year show the progress made in the parish. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine had 60 members; the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 90; the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, 13; the Association of the Holy Childhood, 112, and the Altar Society, 25.

The present officers of the Altar Society of St. Thomas Church (1944), which was first established by Father Langlois 51 years ago, are as follows: Mrs. Waldon Hingle, president; Mrs. Elfy Falgout, vice-president; Mrs. Belle Ellington, secretary-treasurer.

During the summer of 1943, Father Oswald introduced an important innovation, a religious vacation school—the first in the history of St. Thomas Parish—which was conducted by the Dominican Sisters from New Orleans. The Sisters carried on the school at Bertrandville for one



His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel, at Confirmation ceremonies in the present St. Thomas Church, showing the appearance of the interior and the sanctuary.

month, and at St. Thomas Church at Pointe-a-la-Hache for one month. The project proved eminently successful.

After many changes, restrictions in territory, additions and later division of parish territory, the Parish of St. Thomas during the present pastorate of Father Oswald extends along the east bank of the river from the Scarsdale down to Bohemia, and from the river to the Gulf.

There remains for consideration in this review of a century of parish life one more point, and that is the question of religious vocations. Evidence of God's grace and of the inculcation of the Faith by zealous pastors is the fact that the parish has produced several vocations. The earliest encountered is Adrien Martin, son of Edmund Martin and Melasie Cosse, born on September 26, 1839. He was destined for the priesthood, but unfortunately, while at Jackson, Miss., at Christmas time in 1860, during a hunting or fishing trip, he fell into a stream, contracted pneumonia and died on Christmas Eve. His body was brought to Pointe-a-la-Hache, and Father Langlois buried him in St. Thomas Cemetery. When the tomb was opened in 1944, the white Roman collar was found.

The first young lady of the parish to enter religious life, so far as known, was Miss Alice LaRose, who made her First Communion at St. Thomas Church on April 30, 1865, after having been instructed by Father Langlois. She joined the Marianites of the Holy Cross at New Orleans, and became Sister Georgia. She taught Mrs. Elliot Hingle, present housekeeper at the rectory, when she attended Holy Cross Convent.

Miss Olga LeBlanc, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Aristide LeBlanc, also joined the Marianites of the Holy Cross. Another religious vocation from the parish was Miss Rosa Lopinta of Bertrandville, daughter of Peter Lopinta and Anna Caluda, born in 1917, who joined the Dominican Order, becoming Sister Mary Magdalen. Miss Jeanne Casteix of Jesuits' Bend in 1920 also entered the Dominican Order.

Sister Mary Fortunata, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Domingue, born in October, 1915, at Davant, entered the Sisters of the Holy Family in September, 1917.

Such has been the origin and development of St. Thomas Parish of Plaquemines, the mother parish of the lower Mississippi territory, a story of heroic pioneer efforts, of dependence on other churches, of persevering effort to obtain a resident pastor, of sacrifices, tragedies and discouragement, of generosity, of fire, hurricane and floods, of patient work, of piety and faith, of war and prosperity—a long and romantic story, shot through with darkness and inspiring light, interwoven with the romantic life of plantation days and river traffic, and moving hand in hand with the civil and industrial and agricultural growth of the Parish of Plaquemines. And today, under the zealous ministrations of the Divine Word Fathers, St. Thomas Parish goes forward with greater progress and organization and promise than ever.



Most Rev. John W. Shaw, Archbishop of New Orleans, invited the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word to take charge of the Parish of St. Thomas.

Missions of St. Thomas Parish

CHAPTER XII

THE Parish of St. Thomas of Pointe-a-la-Hache, as has been pointed out, is the mother parish of Plaquemines Parish. Our Lady of Good Harbor at Buras was the first parish to be carved out of the original St. Thomas' territory, and its history was published only a few years ago on the occasion of its diamond jubilee. Later came St. Patrick's Church at Home Place, originating in Quartier Ronquille, and its origin has been touched upon in preceding pages. Eventually, Home Place was attached to the Buras Parish. Even older than St. Patrick's was St. Cecilia's Church of Jesuits' Bend, established in 1870, and formed into a parish in 1871, a parish that has been part of St. Thomas' territory, off and on several times, eventually being included in the newer Parish of Belle Chasse, also a daughter of St. Thomas. In addition, we have Bertrandville, Myrtle Grove, Diamond (City Price), West Pointe-a-la-Hache, and others that originally belonged to St. Thomas Parish. Hence, it is proper that all of these be reviewed as to their origin, development and eventual fate.

Jesuits' Bend

L'Anse-aux-Jesuites, on the west bank of the Mississippi River, opposite Bertrandville, poses a mystery as to the origin of its name. Nothing documentary has been found to substantiate an old tradition that the Jesuits had property or a plantation there, and the reference in DeBow's Review of 1847, to the great oaks at that point having been planted by the Jesuit missionaries, likewise lacks confirmation. Nevertheless, the name is a very ancient one. Incidentally, the present centennial of St. Thomas may be regarded as also the diamond jubilee or 75th anniversary of the founding of St. Cecilia's Church at that point, as the actual date of founding is only a few months away.

Name Appears First in 1848

The name of Jesuits' Bend first appears in the St. Thomas registers in 1848, when Father Savelli visited there, performed a burial and baptized. A cemetery was already in existence at that point. Father Savelli visited the section regularly. Father Langlois was no less zealous in his ministrations to the people of Jesuits' Bend, in fact, he realized that this was one of the promising sections of his vast parish, where a chapel should be built, but nothing was done until after the War Between the States.

Apparently in 1870, Father Langlois finally erected a church there, which was placed under the invocation of St. Cecilia. The land was donated by the Celestin Escande family. This church he visited regularly. Upon his recommendation, in 1871, Archbishop Perche erected the Parish of St. Cecilia, and sent Rev. Dominic Crespín as the first pastor. The first marriage entry is dated March 16, 1872, being that of Charles Lewis and Henrietta White. Father Crespín had charge also of the Barataria section in Jefferson Parish, adjoining Plaquemines Parish. We find him on various occasions at the Belsome home, and at other points in lower Jefferson. He continued to serve St. Cecilia's until 1876. For a brief period, Father Badoil, former pastor of Buras, took charge.



The present St. Cecilia's Church, Jesuits' Bend, now a mission of Belle Chasse, was formerly the building for the boys' home, begun by energetic Father Kellogg.

His successor was Rev. L. J. Chabrier, who took up his duties in 1877, and signed the records as pastor of Jesuits' Bend and Barataria. His pastorate, however, continued only until the following year, when Archbishop Perche assigned Rev. Edward Reynes as pastor. Like his predecessors, he served Barataria also. During his absence in 1879, Rev. F. Rouge, curate of St. Augustine's Church at New Orleans, replaced him, also Father Langlois, who had great affection for the people of that section. But Father Reynes served only a short time in 1880, and the parish became vacant. Zealous Father Langlois again returned and even covered the Barataria territory, down to the coast.

Father Jules Bertholin returned as assistant at St. Thomas Church in 1881, and Father Langlois sent him to serve the people of Jesuits' Bend, besides the other missions on the west bank. From February, 1881, Father Bertholin continued to serve St. Cecilia's and eventually he became the administrator, remaining until August, 1892. At that time, Archbishop Janssens felt that the priest there was not given proper support, so he discontinued the parish, and it reverted once more to the status of a mission of St. Thomas.

A new era began for St. Cecilia's in 1900, when Archbishop Chappelle revived the parish and placed it in charge of a remarkable priest, Rev. John George McKenna, who began his duties in September of that year. He is said to have been a member of Parliament in England, and to have held high honors in the Westminster Diocese. A man of unbounded energy and great determination, he proceeded with his work, regardless of circumstances or obstacles. He insisted upon faithful and respectful attendance at Mass on Sundays, and flawless knowledge of catechism by

the children. Even from the altar boys he demanded impeccable service. He was revered, but feared. At Barataria, he offered Mass, likewise at several missions. At times he walked throughout the swamps to Barataria from Jesuits' Bend, and for this purpose, he acquired a pair of huge boots.

Father McKenna crossed the river at Bertrandville which was placed in his care and he gave instructions there, in the old schoolhouse. He offered Mass there on Saturdays, but most of the time the people from Bertrandville crossed over in skiffs to St. Cecilia's for services. Father McKenna served the parish until 1907, his last entry appearing on April 1927. He sold all his belongings and left.

Archbishop Blenk then appointed Rev. Joseph M. Kellogg as pastor of St. Cecilia, and this remarkable pastor and zealous priest began his pastorate early in 1908. Within a short time he set out for a long tour of lower Jefferson which was also in his charge, and already on May 6, 1908, we find him at Clark Cheniere. We get an idea of Father Kellogg's work from a report of his missions on January 1, 1909: Bertrandville, Mass every Sunday, except second Sunday; Barataria, St. Anthony's, twice a month; Clarke Cheniere, once a month; Little Temple (St. John's), four times a year; Bayou Pere, four times a year; Bayou Chicot, once a year; Bois Chacta, once a year. By 1911, he had added Clarksville settlement. Mass once a month; Manila Village, once a year; Hermitage Settlement, once or twice a year and later, oftener. He proposed that Harvey be given to Jesuits' Bend and made the headquarters for the parish, as he stated that Jesuits' Bend is too inaccessible for Barataria. He also proposed that the territory between West Pointe-a-la-Hache and Socola could be better attended from St. Cecilia's than from Pointe-a-la-Hache, and that



Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church at Belle Chasse is now the parish church for much of the west side area that was once served from St. Thomas Church.

a chapel be built at one of the former places. This was not done until Father Cosmas Schneider's time.

Father Kellogg gave much attention to Bertrandville. At first he offered Mass at the old school house, but late in 1908, or early in 1909, he erected a church at that point, which was dedicated under the invocation of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The first Baptism registered there was that of Antonio Lapipolo. The altar at the new Bertrandville church was donated by Father Kellogg's aunt, who was quite wealthy.

Archbishop Blenk incorporated St. Cecilia's in 1908, under the legal title: The Congregation of St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic Church, Jesuits' Bend, La. The board of trustees included Archbishop Blenk, Very Rev. Peter Scotti, Father Kellogg, R. E. Perez, John Halcaran, John Barrois, and Frank Giordano. When Mr. Halcaran died, he was replaced by Martial Casteix, and later Octave Jeanfreau served.

Founded Home for Boys

Shortly after his assumption of the pastorate, Father Kellogg founded a home for boys at Jesuits' Bend, a place that was the forerunner of Hope Haven and modelled along its lines. To raise funds to build the home, Father Kellogg conducted a contest, which netted \$700. Mrs. Henry Illenberger brought in the largest individual amount—\$207.50. He began the boys' home with about 16 boys from New Orleans, having erected a home that serves as the church now, having been used after the 1915 storm. Later, Father Kellogg, who inherited the plantation and other property of his aunt in Mississippi, sought to buy some land from John Meyer of Promised Land, about three miles from Bertrandville, where he planned to build another home for the boys where they could be taught agriculture, but the plan failed to materialize. The home was abandoned about 1912, but Father Kellogg did not give up the idea and tried again in New Orleans at Baronne and Poydras streets, but soon he gave up this also. Father Kellogg and his aunt provided the funds for these homes. He left in 1913, and afterwards went to Galveston, then to the Lafayette diocese.

The great hurricane of 1915 blew down St. Cecilia's church. The statues of the Sacred Heart and Blessed Mother and vestments, from the 1870 church, were salvaged and are still in the present church. The bell, for which Mrs. Celestin Escande and Mr. S. Soulant had been sponsors, is now at Belle Chasse. During the year of the hurricane, Rev. Leonhard Meister was administrator at Jesuits' Bend, but he remained only a short time.

In 1916, when Father Girault took charge of St. Thomas Church, the Chancellor notified him that he had jurisdiction over Jesuits' Bend with all its territory. But having to serve the vast territory on both sides of the river without any assistants, he could serve Jesuits' Bend Mass only once a month and gave instructions around Easter time.

It was only when the Divine Word Fathers took charge of St. Thomas' Parish that proper attention was once more given to Jesuits' Bend.

Rev. Cosmas Schneider, S.V.D.

The rest of the story of St. Cecilia's and the history of the other west

side missions can best be grouped under the work of one of the most efficient, zealous and tireless priests ever to serve that section. This was Rev. Cosmas Schneider, S.V.D., born in the Diocese of Speyer, Germany, in 1888, who went to Mozambique, Africa, after his ordination at Vienna in 1913. World War I interrupted his work, and after a short stay in Portugal and later in his native country, he volunteered again for the missions and came to Mississippi in 1920. He served at Meridian, then as teacher at St. Augustine's Seminary. But beginning with 1928, he devoted himself exclusively to the missions in Plaquemines Parish. At the end of 10 years of work on the west bank, he was sent in 1938 to start a new parish at St. Martinville, La., and last year he was sent to Franklin, La., to develop a series of missions.

Father Schneider came to Jesuits' Bend where he remained a short time, then went to Belle Chasse. He remodelled the old boys' home of Father Kellogg into a church, funds having been raised by means of a fair. The initial First Communion class of July 29, 1928, had 11 members. Later, the church was moved back on account of the levee and the building was renovated, and again recently by Father Boerding.

He erected a church at Belle Chasse in 1929, which was placed under the invocation of Our Lady of Prompt Succor and Father Schneider became pastor of the new parish. Forty-five made their Communion there on July 14, 1929. A fire struck the new church in November, 1930, but undaunted, Father Schneider rebuilt it immediately. Eventually the church and the rectory under Father Boerding were moved to the Belle Chasse highway and the buildings were given complete renovation.

Father Schneider covered the whole west bank from Belle Chasse down to Diamond or City Price, but eventually, the last two were returned to the care of St. Thomas church and Father Haines for four years, from 1938 to 1942. When Father Schneider left, Father Boerding, who had been pastor at St. Thomas, became pastor at Belle Chasse and he directed Jesuits' Bend.

Myrtle Grove

Myrtle Grove, site of the famous Wilkinson Plantation, was visited by Father Langlois on his tours along the west bank. However, it was Father Girault who first gave special attention to this center. He offered Mass there on weekdays in an old sugar-house, and gave instructions, and in 1925, he informed the Archbishop that a chapel was needed there. In fact, that year he began a chapel, laid the foundations and gathered material to build but in 1926, his health was failing and he could not attend to the place as he should, according to his own statement.

Father Kellogg also visited Myrtle Grove, and his first Baptism there, dated April 11, 1909, was that of Bellina Durand.

It was left to Father Schneider to complete what Father Girault had undertaken. Dr. Herbert M. Shilstone gave the present chapel building at Myrtle Grove and generously donated it to the Church. In 1936, it was necessary to move the church, which was done under the direction of Father Schneider.

Deer Range

Colonel Maunsel White, Sr., operated the plantation at Deer Range,

and Father Langlois visited there. The house built by the Colonel was used for divine services, during many years, usually on Fridays. Father Langlois baptized some of the Colonel's children. The Doughertys of Baltimore who bought Deer Range, donated the property to St. Agnes Asylum of Baltimore. Father Kellogg and Father Girault visited there. Father Schneider likewise attended to that section.

Pointe Celeste

Father Girault devoted attention to West Pointe-a-la-Hache. He offered Mass there occasionally in a cabin, and when he had First Communion in 1926, he had 84 in the class.

Junior

Father Langlois made calls at the plantation of Bradish and Johnson, in the section now called Woodland. When he baptized Evelline Elizabeth Meyer at Junior Plantation, it was a unique occasion—there were two godfathers, Col. Maunsel White and Karl Khon. Father Kellogg seems to have established St. Joseph's Chapel there, which he served once a month. This was a house which was set aside for services.

West Pointe-a-la-Hache

A settlement developed on the west bank opposite the Parish seat, and it became known as West Pointe-a-la-Hache, the landing for those crossing the river in boats, and eventually the terminus of the steel ferry that was put into operation between the two points. Father Langlois gave attention to the people who resided in that area, during his pastorate from 1857 to 1887, and so did Father Colle who visited there occasionally, and Father Kellogg. Father Eyraud started to teach catechism there, assembling his classes under a large oak tree, where the Castellano store is now located.

However, it was left to Father Girault to devote serious attention to the spiritual welfare of the people there. There was no church, so he used private buildings. In his First Communion class of 1925, he had 45 persons. Already the year before, the place had weekday Mass.

When Father Hagen, the first Divine Word priest, came, he served West Pointe-a-la-Hache, and his first Baptism there was that of Virginia Viola Sylve in 1928.

That same year, Father Cosmas Schneider began to take charge of the mission, and on November 19, 1928, he registered his first marriage—Peter Philipp and Melanie Landry. Despite the distance he had to travel, from far away Belle Chasse, Father Schneider for the next seven years (until 1936), gave devoted attention to this mission. He had no church or rectory, so he rented a room and remained several days on his periodical visits, and rented a house to have Mass, at first on the fifth Sunday of the month, and later, once each month. He also gave instructions on these visits. The school was dropped at Jesuits' Bend, and another started at West Pointe-a-la-Hache. Miss Randell has taught at that point and at City Price for some 20 years. The school was financed through the generosity of Mother Katharine Drexel and in part by the Plaquemines Parish school board.

Father Hoenderop took charge of this mission after 1936, relieving Father Schneider of this mission and City Price. Father Hoenderop

was very zealous, and did everything for the spread of the Faith, giving the people Mass every Sunday, but this was regarded at first as too much by some of the parishioners, as previous priests had been able to have Mass only once a month. He continued his devoted services until his death in 1938.

At that time, Father Haines, the assistant at St. Thomas Church, began to serve the mission and City Price, continuing until they were attached to the Buras parish in August, 1942. Difficulties over a house that was rented for a school developed, and Father Haines was obliged to seek another location. A poor building was found, and it became both school and church.

City Price

The official name of this settlement is Diamond, but it has been known as Quartier Barthelemy, Free Town and City Price, the last-mentioned still remaining popular. That name is first found in the parish records in 1913, when it was inserted by Father Kellogg in connection with a Baptism there. Old-timers say that the name goes far back, possibly to 1850. The mission is known as St. Paulinus.

Father Langlois, from his first years at Pointe-a-la-Hache, crossed the river and attended to the people of Quartier Barthelemy, as the records show. In pioneer days then, Mass was offered in Ave Barthelemy's house. Father Colle was also accustomed when able to do so, to visit City Price and administer the Sacraments. It often happened that when he came for a funeral, for example, parents came in large numbers with infants for Baptism, and others came for marriages, or he was called to give Extreme Unction. Father Kellogg was the next priest to visit City Price, when he had charge of the whole west bank, for several years.



Group of children at St. Paulinus School, City Price, Pointe-a-la-Hache Mission.

Father Eyraud was more regular and more frequent in his visits. He baptized a number of children and conducted First Communion at City Price.

With the arrival of Father Girault in 1916, City Price came in for greater spiritual attention, more than ever before. He was determined to make proper provision for the people there, and he began to offer Mass once a month, then twice a month, using private homes or his tent, which he made into a sanctuary, and piling boxes and crates to make an altar. He prayed, he exhorted and he stormed—people say he often walked in the hot sun in penance to get justice for them. He performed many corporal works of mercy too, providing the needy with clothing and shoes, and even obtaining seeds. Either he supplied these things himself, or got benefactors to provide them. But he exacted respect as a priest of God, and unflagging respect for Divine Services. People are still singing the praises of beloved Father Girault.

Land Donated By Barthelemy

One of his aims was to provide a suitable church for City Price. On October 20, 1919, Jean Baptiste Barthelemy and Jean Barthelemy, widow of Pascal Barthelemy, donated a half acre of ground near the Barthelemy Cemetery, to St. Thomas Parish for the erection of a Catholic church and a school for the education of Colored children. Prior to this Ave Barthelemy had taught school for more than 30 years at Socola Canal. Ever-generous Mother Katharine Drexel made a donation of \$1500 for a school on the Domingue property, but Father Girault felt that the need of a church and a school was more pressing, so he devoted most of the money to that project. Former Governor Warmoth donated lumber and other material, and other lumber was obtained by boats that went up and down the river salvaging floating timber.

The temporary chapel, erected in the garden back of the St. Louis Cathedral at New Orleans, while the Cathedral was being repaired, was dismantled, and this was used also for the erection of the church at City Price. The combination church and school was completed in 1920, and the grand opening was held on November 1, 1920, by Father Girault. Mother Drexel gave financial aid for the operation of the school, and later the school board helped, from 1920 to 1940, then the school board took over the school expenses.

Mass Offered Every Other Sunday

In 1923 and 1924, Father Girault had Mass every other Sunday and occasionally on weekdays, but he had regular catechism instruction and visits to the school. During the 1920-1921 period, he had 30 children in the First Communion class.

The Divine Word Fathers took charge in 1928, and Father Hagen came over to serve City Price. The records for that year show 50 Baptisms for City Price and West Pointe-a-la-Hache. On May 17 of that year, Father Hagen and Father Haas had 43 First Communicants at St. Jude's Chapel. Then, shortly afterwards, Father Cosmas Schneider took charge of the west bank missions, and although he was extremely zealous in his work,

he had too much territory to cover to give City Price services as frequently as had been the case previously.

Repairs to the mission were made possible by an incident connected with Confirmation. Archbishop Shaw came on May 15, 1930, to Confirm a class of 130. While the ceremonies proceeded, a heavy rain set in, and the old roof began to leak, the water cascading on His Excellency. An umbrella was requisitioned to protect the Archbishop and those receiving Confirmation. At the luncheon that followed, one of the priests present referred to the incident and to the need of repairs, and His Excellency promptly approved the repairs, and more—it is said that he aided in covering the expenses involved, for Father Schneider.

Father Hoenderop assumed charge of City Price in 1936, and continued to serve its St. Jude Chapel devotedly until he died in 1938. He inaugurated Mass every Sunday, and City Price during that time had close attention and regular services.

Father Haines then took over St. Jude's. For nearly five years, he crossed the river regularly in all sorts of weather and in all seasons, day and night, to provide ministrations to the people of St. Jude's Mission. His zealous services across the river continued uninterruptedly until August, 1942, when City Price was taken in charge by the Franciscan Fathers. Father Haines up to this time, has the longest record for service as assistant at St. Thomas Church, a period of six years.

Domingue School

A community had developed a short distance from Pointe-a-la-Hache which became known as Domingue from the Domingue family that re-



Domingue School was the culmination of many years of zealous efforts of Davant residents to provide education for their children. It is a mission of St. Thomas.

sided in that section, and from Domingue school erected there, but the settlement carries the name also of Davant, which is one of the missions of St. Thomas Parish. To the Catholics it is known as Blessed Martin de Porres.

Decades ago there was a school at Domingue, and as far back as 1870. Miss Jenny Constantine (as far as the name can be ascertained) taught in a public school there. Long ago catechism was taught to the children in that section by Mrs. Felix Duplessis, Mrs. Leo Domingue, Mrs. V. Gai, Mrs. Maurice Domingue and Mrs. August Frederick, the last mentioned on Frederick's place. Miss Cecile Carter taught public school at the Young Men's Association Hall, and in 1912, Miss Georgia taught public school at Colette place. Joseph Domingue in 1914, taught private school just before the Domingue school was built.

Educational League Is Organized

The pastors of Pointe-a-la-Hache visited Domingue in making the rounds of the parish, but it was Father Girault who was the first to manifest greater interest in the community and to endeavor to provide for it spiritually. St. Joseph's Educational League had been established somewhat earlier and it had a school for the children in 1914, which included likewise a night school. The promoters of the league were Mrs. Jules Frederick, Mrs. Mitchel Lafranc, Mrs. Gaston Isidore, Mrs. Antoine Isidore, Mrs. George Cornin, Miss Josephine Domingue, Miss Beatrice Ganier and Miss Sophie Domingue. Father Girault collaborated zealously with the people of that section, who were striving so energetically to provide education for their children.

Immediate assistance was given by ever-generous Mother Katherine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. On July 3, 1920, Misses Josephine and Sophie Domingue donated a piece of land to St. Thomas Parish for the purpose of erecting a school for the benefit of Colored children of the vicinity, in accord with conditions required by Mother Drexel and arrangements by Archbishop Shaw. Mother Drexel donated \$1500 for the erection of the school, but Father Girault felt that City Price was in even greater need for a church, so the funds were temporarily applied to the latter place. Meanwhile Father Girault issued a moving appeal to persons of all races and creeds to help in this work at Domingue, and planned for the erection of the school and its maintenance, even looking into the future and envisaging an addition to the building and obtaining of two teachers.

Xavier University Graduates Are Teachers

Mother Katherine Drexel came forward with another donation—\$1000 this time—and Father Girault built the school. The Fathers' Educational Club was formed then at Domingue school. It opened at the end of 1920, or very early in 1921. The first two teachers at the new Domingue school were Misses Jean LaCroix and Rose DeBlanc. Present teachers are Misses Marcelle Quezerque and Alice Celestine. Practically all of the teachers here as in the other similar schools of the parish have been graduates of Xavier University in New Orleans, trained by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and they have accomplished splendid work, especially in the spiritual field. This is true also of the west side of the river, where such

work of Xavier graduates (as well as on the coast bank) elicited the admiration of His Excellency, Archbishop Rummel. Later the parish school board assumed the full burden of Domingue school, whereas at first maintenance for a time was divided between Mother Drexel and the board.

During the first pastorate of Father Hoenderop, there was approximately 84 who completed their school work and diplomas were presented to them. Father Oswald, the present pastor, made Domingue a regular mission and since August 9, 1942, it has Mass every Sunday with an attendance of some 300, and regular catechism instruction.

Bertrandville

This town is said to have derived its name from a Frenchman, Pierre Bertrand, who acquired some property at that point many decades ago. The settlement was first given regular spiritual ministrations by Father McKenna, pastor of St. Cecilia's Church at Jesuits' Bend, who was given charge of this mission, during his pastorate from 1900 to 1907. He crossed the river to the east side and gave religious instructions in the old school-house, and offered Mass there on Saturdays. Jim Steele was the ferry captain in those days. Under Father Kellogg, the next pastor at St. Cecilia's, Bertrandville continued as a mission of Jesuits' Bend.

It was Father Kellogg, at the end of 1908, who undertook to build a church at Bertrandville. The property on which the church is built, was donated by a Colored woman, Mary Ann Duffin. She was presented with a check of \$25 in appreciation for her gift. When completed, the church was called St. Mary's Assumption Chapel. Father Kellogg's aunt donated the altar. The Italian families gave a statue of St. Leo of Lucca. John Palazzo gave the Stations of the Cross, and Charles Caro donated the vigil lamp. The Sacred Heart statue in front of the church is the gift of Joseph Meyer in memory of Mrs. Meyer. Carroll Miller gave a



St. Mary's Assumption Chapel at Bertrandville, now a mission of St. Thomas, was built by Father Kellogg who served the vicinity from St. Cecilia's at Jesuits' Bend.

chalice in memory of his brother. St. Mary's Assumption Chapel was made possible through the zeal and efforts of Father Kellogg and Henry and Joseph Meyer.

In pioneer years, catechism was taught by Miss Emma Grob, Miss Mary Giordano and Mrs. Fred Caro. Antonio Lapipolo was the first one to be baptized there according to the registers; this was in September, 1909. In his notes for that year, Father Kellogg wrote: "Bertrandville, Mass on Sunday, when the weather permits me to cross the river." However, beginning with January, 1912, Assumption Chapel had Mass every Sunday.

Father Eyraud served Bertrandville and gave the people religious services. His successor, Father Girault, came regularly every other Sunday to minister to the people. The 1916-1917 First Communion class totalled 25, and in 1921, there were 26. Bishop Laval gave Confirmation at Assumption Chapel on June 29, 1921, to 51 persons, and on May 28, 1929, to 65 persons. Father Girault also conducted instruction classes and held May devotions.

Father Hoenderop organized the Altar Society at Bertrandville, with Mrs. J. Ben Meyer, president, and Miss Alice Dobson, secretary-treasurer, in 1930. He also served the mission every Friday and Sunday, beginning with August 28, 1928, during his first pastorate. St. John's Club was organized by Father Koeller in 1938. The officers were Roy Grob, president; Alfred Grob, vice-president; Paul Chiapetta, treasurer, and Wilfred Caro, secretary. He organized the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin in 1939, with the following officers: Jessie Collura, president; Jenny Chiapetta, treasurer, and Belle Cosse, secretary. Father Koeller also had the chapel renovated. Mrs. A. N. Miller donated a new chalice in memory of her son, A. R. Miller, and Mrs. R. Dragon donated a beautiful statue of the Holy Infant.

A mission was conducted at Assumption Chapel by Rev. Raphael Rossi on September 13, 1914, during Father Kellogg's pastorate. Another mission was given by Rev. Father Stanislaus, a Passionist priest, during Father Koeller's administration, and another by Rev. A. Gaudino, during Father Girault's pastorate.

Such, briefly, is the story of the missions of St. Thomas Parish, developed during the past century, centers of Faith in the vast territory assigned to the care of the pastors of Pointe-a-la-Hache.



L'Envoi

AS WE close the pages of the colorful and stirring history of 100 years of St. Thomas' Parish, the Fathers of the Divine Word, who are now in charge of the parish, feel that the living owe a debt of gratitude to those who have gone before them, the pioneers and their descendants and their spiritual leaders, who have made this history so outstanding and memorable. They owe it to the generations of the past, for their forefathers have made possible the centennial of today. Their labors and achievements rooted the Faith in the soil of Plaquemines. It was nourished by their sweat and sacrifices and tears. The Faith stands out today as a beacon which was lit by them long ago.

In this centenary, our thoughts turn to them, for to them belongs much of the honor and the glory—pastors, assistants and parishioners. Through pioneer days, in primitive conditions, with strictly limited means of transportation, sometimes far removed from church, those devoted pioneer parishioners trudged long, weary miles to enjoy the privileges of the ministrations of the Church through her priests, and above all to receive the Sacraments. Children, too, received the rudiments of the Faith in catechism at the cost of similar hardships and difficulties, and suffered these inconveniences for long months for the joy of First Communion. Through the heat and rain, in bitter cold and in all kinds of weather, they came to their parish church or to the missions for divine services.

And these devoted priests, too, suffered even greater hardships and many privations that the Mass and the Sacraments and the word of God might be brought to their people, regardless of the obstacles or the difficulties that they faced. Thus slowly and patiently, and with inspiring patience and a spirit of service, these zealous priests built the parish spirit that flourishes along the banks of the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish. We need not wander far into the mission fields of foreign lands to find marvelous examples of missionary spirit. We find it beautifully and inspiringly exemplified in the lives and labors of the pastors of St. Thomas Parish, who went afoot and by boat and by horses to find the sheep of the Good Shepherd, scattered for miles over a vast area. We find it in their sacrifices, their great labors and their great achievements—not in great edifices, but in the souls of their people.

Today, pastors and priests just as devoted, just as willing, labor on, ready to give their all to bring their flock ever closer to Christ. There is still much to be done in attendance at Holy Mass, in more frequent reception of the Sacraments, greater zeal and an energetic, dynamic spirit of Catholic action. Parishioners of today have received a great heritage from their forebears. They need but gaze back over the past 100 years, and this should serve as an incentive for them to rise in determination to carry on with their devoted spiritual leaders, the Fathers of the Divine Word, to surge forward into a new and more intense Catholic life—not merely in thought, prayer and desire, but in deeds, in an exemplary Catholic life that will shine before men and lead others to serve loyally Christ, Who beckons to them to come closer to His Divine Heart.

HECKMAN
BINDERY INC.



JUNE 99

Bound-To-Pleas® N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA 46962

